



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

March 19, 2020

This is an interim report since so much is changing moment to moment.

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

[ODE Offers Guidance On School Closures](#)

The Ohio Department of Education is attempting to provide clarity to educators and school administrators amid a statewide school closure, but some key questions remain open.

Funding for typical school districts and charter schools will be unaffected by [Gov. Mike DeWine](#)'s decision to shutter schools for at least three weeks to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, according to [a FAQ](#) posted to ODE's website.

The answer to the question of how the closure will affect state-mandated testing is murkier.

"Obviously, no state testing will take place during the closure period. The Ohio Department of Education will take appropriate action to adjust the state's testing schedule (both in terms of administration and reporting) to accommodate the three-week closure. The intention is to be as flexible as possible," the document states.

Gov. DeWine last week signaled testing may need to be canceled, a move multiple Democratic lawmakers are supporting.

"What we are going to do is not let testing get in the way of life at this point," the governor said shortly after announcing the closure. "If we can't have testing this year, we can't have testing this year. The world will not come to an end."

ODE also intends to work with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure the state's report card accountability system does not reflect negative outcomes related to the closure.

"We are sensitive to this reality. The intention is not for schools to be punished or penalized for conditions beyond their control," the FAQ states. "It is too early to make any final decisions, but our focus will be to ensure that the state's report card system appropriately accommodates these circumstances."



Changes to requirements for minimum hours of instruction are not currently expected as the state expects schools "to make a good faith effort to provide educational services within available capabilities," according to the department.

While districts still can choose to observe scheduled spring break periods after the closure ends, school boards also can move the break into the ongoing closure window.

Although no changes to high school graduation requirements have been announced for the class of 2020 yet, ODE said its "commitment is to provide reasonable flexibility in the interest of doing what is right for students."

Paolo DeMaria, the state superintendent of public instruction, said in a [video message](#) he's been impressed by the initial reaction of communities throughout Ohio to the challenges presented by the state's coronavirus response.

"Sure, it's going to be a little bit different, but I love the can-do attitude that I'm seeing from students and everyone else," he said.

The superintendent encouraged school administrators, educators and parents to continue submitting questions to the department for review as the closure continues.

"We know there are going to be more questions, so we invite you to continue to feed those our way and to make sure that we answer them," he said.

Volume 89, Report 54, Article 9

Monday, March 16, 2020, 10:17 PM

State Orders Polling Locations Closed

State officials took the extraordinary step late Monday night of prohibiting all Ohio polling locations from opening on Tuesday morning, saying that holding an election in the short term would put the lives of thousands of citizens at risk.

Acting at the direction of [Gov. Mike DeWine](#), State Health Director Amy Acton will sign an order that closes all in-person polling stations due to a health emergency.

"During this time when we face an unprecedented public health crisis, to conduct an election tomorrow would force poll workers and voters to place themselves at an unacceptable health risk of contracting coronavirus," the governor said in a statement



released by his office. "As such, Health Director Dr. Amy Acton will order the polls closed as a health emergency. While the polls will be closed tomorrow, Secretary of State Frank LaRose will seek a remedy through the courts to extend voting options so that every voter who wants to vote will be granted that opportunity."

The action was announced shortly after 10 pm, hours before polls were set to open at 6:30 am.

Earlier Monday, the governor and secretary of state were part of an effort to seek a court order to block the election and set June 2 as Ohio's primary election day, but that attempt was denied by Franklin County Common Pleas Court Judge Richard Frye. ([Complaint](#), [TRO request](#))

Plaintiffs argued that voters and pollworkers would be risking their lives amid the spread of a deadly virus if the election went forward. That risk, they argued, violated voters' constitutional right to cast their ballots.

Judge Frye rejected the attempt, saying he was "very reluctant to undermine" Ohio law that set March 17 as the election day. He said taking such an action would set a "terrible precedent" for future elections.

Prior to the issuance of the order, the governor and secretary issued a joint statement.

"The only thing more important than a free and fair election is the health and safety of Ohioans. The Ohio Department of Health and the CDC have advised against anyone gathering in groups larger than 50 people, which will occur if the election goes forward," they said. "Additionally, Ohioans over 65 and those with certain health conditions have been advised to limit their nonessential contact with others, affecting their ability to vote or serve as poll workers. Logistically, under these extraordinary circumstances, it simply isn't possible to hold an election tomorrow that will be considered legitimate by Ohioans. They mustn't be forced to choose between their health and exercising their constitutional rights."

Primary & Secondary Education

HB 527

WOMEN'S SPORTS ([Powell, J.](#), [Stoltzfus, R.](#))

To enact the "Save Women's Sports Act" to require schools, state institutions of higher education, and private



colleges to designate separate single-sex teams and sports for each sex.

HB 529

SCHOOL AUDITS ([Miller, J.](#), [Lepore-Hagan, M.](#))

To require one-time performance audits of school districts with a current academic distress commission.

HB 532

EDUCATION STANDARDS ([Brinkman, T.](#), [Kelly, B.](#))

To require the State Board of Education to adopt standards for mental health education, to permit school districts to include mental health education in their curriculum, and to make an appropriation.

Higher Education

HB 521

PUBLIC SERVICE LOANS ([Sweeney, B.](#))

To require the Chancellor of Higher Education and public service organizations to disseminate information regarding the federal public service loan forgiveness programs.

From: KMaxson@highered.ohio.gov <KMaxson@highered.ohio.gov>

Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2020 2:39 PM

To: Dawn Marie Shinew <dshinew@bgsu.edu>; Wightman, James <jwightman@capital.edu>

Cc: EdPrep@highered.ohio.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Program reviews

Hello Jim and Dawn,

Please share with your colleagues that ODHE would like you to focus on your students and addressing their needs at this time so in light of the extraordinary situation we find ourselves in we are extending the deadline for program review submissions until July 1. I hope to have a guidance document about student teaching etc. to you by the end of the day tomorrow, it is a little more complicated.

Thank you for all you do,

Krista Maxson, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor



Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

P-16 Initiatives