

READING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: March 17, 2020

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Reading Public Schools and all school-related activities will be closed school from March 16 - April 7, 2020.

The information detailed in this document is intended to provide up to date guidance during this period. It is important to note that this is a fluid situation and so this document will be regularly updated and modified. **It is recommended that you revisit this page frequently for the latest updates and information.** When updates are made, we will send you the revised link via email, Blackboard Connect, Blogs, and other RPS social media platforms.

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Frequently Asked Questions Student Learning

Q.	Are the days during the three week closure counted as “school days?”
A.	No. These are non-school days. These days will essentially be considered a three week school closing period (March 16 -April 7th). At this time, there is no expectation of required online learning or for the provision of educational services during this period. It is important to note that the school year will not extend beyond the 185th day (June 22nd).
Q.	Are there expectations around Distance and Online Learning Expectations for

	Students or Teachers?
A.	<p>At this point, during this closing, our days will be considered non-school days. We have compiled optional resources and links by school level (PreK, each grade in elementary, middle school and high school) for all students. These resources have been started and will continue to be enhanced. They will be found on the Teaching and Learning webpage under a tab marked <i>Covid-19</i> or at the link here:</p> <p>https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/remote-learning/</p> <p>We will continue to add information as it is developed. These optional learning activities are being assembled with the goal of providing students and families with learning opportunities that can be used at home.</p>
Q.	What optional resources are available for students to enrich learning during this period of closure?
A.	<p>We are continuing to compile optional resources and links by school level (PreK, each grade in elementary, middle school and high school) for all students and will update our documents as they are developed.</p> <p>https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/remote-learning/</p>
Q.	Given a three week closure, what happens with the MCAS ELA test for sophomore students?
A.	<p>At this time we will not be in school during the previously scheduled MCAS window. We expect to hear more from DESE in the near future on this topic as a great many schools are in the same position.</p>
Q.	What about MCAS testing for other grades?
A.	<p>At this time, we have not heard that MCAS testing will be delayed. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will be communicating details and we will communicate any updates as they occur.</p>
Q.	What if I am scheduled to take the SAT and the school/testing center is closed?
	<p>The College Board has posted information on their website about changes in the SAT testing process.</p>
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Frequently Asked Questions

Special Education/Student Support

Q. Q: During the period of time a district is closed related to COVID-19, must the district provide special education services to students with disabilities?

A. When a school district is closed during this ongoing public health emergency and does not provide any educational services to the general student population during the period of closure, the school district is not required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Districts should be communicating with parents and guardians during and after a school closure regarding their child's IEP services. This ongoing communication will help educators, administrators, and parents/guardians understand any impact of the closure on students' access to a free appropriate public education. After an extended closure, districts should review how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to students and convene individual IEP team meetings, as necessary, in order to make an individualized determination as to whether additional services are needed for individual students.

Q. Q: How can I provide students with disabilities with educational resources during the period of school closure?

A. Although schools are suspending in-person educational operations, staff should be planning for how best to equitably provide alternative access to educational resources during this period of school closure. All students can benefit from the structure of learning activities when school is closed. Educational resources could include reading lists, Internet-based lessons, work packets, or other available learning approaches. These resources will assist in maintaining continuity of learning experiences for students and a connection to classmates and teachers during the period of closure. In preparing these resources, districts should consider accommodations and modifications that students need to ensure equal opportunity of access.

The Department encourages educators and administrators to reach out to students and families by phone, email, and other means of communication during a period of extended closure. For example, counselors, special educators, related services providers, and general educators may provide needed support to students remotely during periods of extended closure.

The Department will post information about available educational resources on its website here. We will update this resource list as new resources are identified.

Q.	Q: How do the school closures impact special education students who receive services in community-based settings and students who participate in inclusive concurrent enrollment programs at institutions of higher education?
A.	A district is not required to provide services to students with disabilities during extended school closures if the district does not provide any educational services to students during this time. This includes services that are provided in community-based settings and participation in inclusive concurrent enrollment programs at institutions of higher education. Once school resumes, the district should review how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to individual students and convene individual IEP team meetings as necessary to make an individualized determination about whether a student needs additional services.
Q.	Are all students eligible for compensatory services following these extended school closures?
A.	Whether a student with disabilities is entitled to receive additional services because of the school's closure is an individualized determination to be made by the IEP team. Teams should consider factors such as the student's academic progress to date towards their IEP goals, the nature of the service(s) missed, the frequency of the service(s) missed, reports from providers, previous educational history, history and concerns of substantial regression. Team decisions must be documented in accordance with IEP procedures, e.g., N1.
Q.	After schools reopen, does a student need to submit a doctor's note if they need to be out longer for personal health reasons?
A.	Given the current health crisis, the Department does not recommend requiring a physician's note for attendance-related purposes for students who may need to be out for a longer time period. If the student's parents, however, are seeking home or hospital services educational services during the additional time, the regular home/hospital process must be followed, including the completion of the Physician's Affirmation of Need for Temporary Home or Hospital Education for Medically Necessary Reasons, which requires a physician's signature.
Q.	Must public and private approved day or residential programs comply with the Governor's closure order?
A.	We recognize that day and residential programs serve some of the most vulnerable students in the Commonwealth and are confident that you and your staff are making appropriate decisions to ensure the health and safety of the

	<p>students for whom you educate. COVID-19 is a fluid situation and decisions are evolving. While public and private residential and day special education schools were not included in the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order, these schools should refer to the four scenarios described in Commissioner Riley’s Guidance to Elementary and Secondary Schools Regarding COVID-19 on Friday, March 13, 2020 (available at https://www.mass.gov/doc/guidance-to-elementary-and-secondary-schools-regarding-covid-19) to determine whether a student or staff should be in isolation, quarantined, or to determine whether a school should close.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If a public or private residential or day special education school decides to close, Administrators must contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Board of Health ○ Department of Public Health at 617-983-6800 ○ EEC licensor in writing ○ DESE, Associate Commissioner, Helene Bettencourt, at Helene.H.Bettencourt@mass.gov or 781-338-3120 and copy Nina Marchese at Nina.M.Marchese@mass.gov ○ DCF, if appropriate <p>The school must document all factors leading to the decision to close and maintain onsite at the school available for review the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The specific circumstances leading to the decision ● Who was involved in making the decision? ● When was the decision made? ● When was closure implemented? ● How and when were parents notified?
<p>Q.</p>	<p>How can the district meet special education evaluation timelines if schools are closed?</p>
<p>A.</p>	<p>The Department recognizes that school closures may impact the ability of school districts to meet the 30-day timeline for conduct evaluations in addition to the 45 school working day timeline to develop an IEP after receipt of a parent’s written consent to evaluation or reevaluation. (603 CMR 28.04(2) and 603 CMR 28.05(1).) More specific information will be forthcoming.</p>
<p>Q.</p>	<p>Can parties get an extension on due process hearing timelines?</p>
<p>A.</p>	<p>While the IDEA provides that a final decision on a due process complaint must be issued not later than 45 days after the expiration of the 30-day resolution period, a hearing officer can grant an extension of time beyond the required timelines at the request of either party.</p>

	Please note that effective March 15, 2020, the Bureau of Special Education Appeals will not hold any proceedings in person until further notice. The BSEA will provide opportunities for remote participation, as feasible.
Q.	A student's IEP expires during the school closure period. Will it still be in effect?
A.	Yes. The current IEP will remain in effect until a new IEP is developed, irrespective of the expired date reflected in the IEP forms.
Q.	My child is on an IEP or 504 Plan, and I am concerned about the implications of the closure on my child's educational progress.
A.	We agree this is a very trying situation for all students and adults. Upon the conclusion of the closure, and the re-opening of the district, we will hold reentry meetings to determine what type of impact the closure had on all student learning. Please refer to the following guidance. distributed by the National Department of Education.
Q.	Q: What are the district's obligations to provide FAPE to students with disabilities during extended school closures related to this health emergency?
A.	A district is not required to provide services to students with disabilities during extended school closures if the district does not provide any educational services to students during this period of time. Once school resumes, the district should review how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to individual students and convene IEP team meetings as necessary in order to make an individualized determination as to whether a student needs additional services.
Q.	My child is on an IEP, and attends an out of district placement. What are the implications of Reading's closure on my child attending the out of district placement?
A.	As information is changing daily, please communicate directly with the outplacement school for any updates on individual public and private day school closures. As of this correspondence, our transportation vendor has confirmed they will continue to transport our students to outplacements that remain open. Please refer to the following guidance. distributed by the National Department of Education.
Q.	My child is on an IEP and receives "services only" (i.e. speech/physical therapy/occupational therapy). Will my child receive these services during the closure?
A.	Services will not be provided during the closure, consistent with how this is handled on

	snow days.
Q.	Will my child’s special education liaison, related service provider, and elementary/secondary coordinators be available if I have a question during this two week closure?
A.	Team Chairs, the Assistant Director of Student Services, and the Director of Student Services will be available to assist with specific questions as needed. They will be checking email daily and you can expect a “check in” from your child’s team chair, in the form of a phone call or email during this time as well.
Q.	I am looking for general tips on how to support my child during this three week closure.
A.	Please see the following resources for general tips that have been shared with us by Lunenburg Public Schools. In addition, our Student Services department is developing resources for your child during school closure and will be emailing the information directly to families.
Q.	What should I do about the deposit for R.I.S.E. tuition for next school year?
A.	<p>Given the fact that the deposits were due today, March 16th, the deadline has been extended to Monday, April 27th.</p> <p>If you choose to still send the deposit prior to our school opening, please mail to R. I. S. E. Preschool, 62 Oakland Rd., Reading, MA 01867 attention: Denise Santoro.</p> <p><i>The most important part of this process is that you notify us of your intention to have your child attend R. I. S. E. Preschool, by Friday March 20th. Please do this by emailing Denise Santoro (denise.santoro@reading.k12.ma.us).</i></p> <p>If you need additional time to make the deposit, please don’t hesitate to reach out to Kelley Bostwick, R. I. S. E. Preschool Director. (Kelley.bostwick@reading.k12.ma.us)</p>
Q.	Will my child receive home services or have EI transition meetings during this time?
A.	There will not be home services or EI transition meetings during this time. Services and meetings will be rescheduled as soon as possible upon the return to school.
Q.	If I just had a meeting when can I expect to receive the IEP/504?
A.	Teams are trying to complete all of the documents as soon as possible. You will receive the documents within 10 school days of the meeting.
Q.	My child has a 504. Can I use the accommodations in the 504 while completing the general education extension activities?

A.	Your child has access to all accommodations while completing the work.
Q.	Will I have my child's IEP meeting while school is closed?
A.	IEP meetings that are scheduled for the next three weeks, or for the duration of the closure, will be rescheduled. When school resumes we will work collaboratively and efficiently with families to ensure that evaluation and IEP timelines are met by following guidance from both the state and federal Departments of Education.
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Frequently Asked Questions Activities, Events, and Athletics

Q.	Are there any athletic, club, extended day or rental activity events happening during this period of closure?
A.	No. All school-related events are canceled during this period. In addition, as all school buildings are closed all outside rentals, including Town Recreation activities, have also been cancelled. At this time, we have also halted future rentals until a firm re-open date is known.
Q.	Are Spring Sports delayed?
A.	Yes. The MIAA Board of Directors voted on March 16, 2020, to amend the start of the 2020 spring sports season in light of recent mandates from Governor Baker and recommendations from governing health agencies. The MIAA Board of Directors voted on March 16th to amend the start of the 2020 spring sports season. The updated start date for the 2020 spring season is April 27, 2020 . In addition, the MIAA Board of Directors voted to have completion of regular season and tournament games by June 20, 2020 with consideration of June 21, 2020 for weather and facility needs.
Q.	Are All Chorus and Band concerts, and Arts Fest cancelled?
A.	At this time Arts Fest has been cancelled. More information will be forthcoming regarding the spring concerts.
Q.	Will I be reimbursed if I paid a deposit for a rental through Use of School Property?
A.	We will be working on reimbursing deposits paid for events that have been cancelled. We will work with renters in regards to rescheduling any events once the buildings are reopened.
Q.	Is registration for the 2020/2021 Extended Day Program closed?
A.	Currently, registration for the 2020/2021 Extended Day has been postponed. We have space available, however, with the closing of the Reading Public Schools we have delayed the registration process until April 7, 2020. Information regarding the Extended Day registration process can be found at: https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/departments/extended-day-program/ For more information or questions regarding the Extended Day Program please email Chris Nelson at Chris.Nelson@reading.k12.ma.us

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

Q.	How will the days of a three week closure count against school days?
A.	Reading will be in school through June 22, 2020 which is our regularly scheduled 185th day. The Commissioner of Education has already waived the 180 day rule and stated that no school district is required to go beyond their 185th scheduled day on the school calendar.
Q.	Currently the schools are closed through April 7, 2020. Will this be extended? How will we be notified?
A.	The Reading Public Schools will continue to monitor this fluid situation and will make the best determinations in the best interest of the students and staff. Information will continue to be provided via Blackboard Connect, on our website , the Superintendent's Blog , on Facebook via @readingschools on Twitter, and on all major news outlets.
Q.	What will happen to April vacation (April 20-24)?
A.	At this time, the April vacation week is scheduled as planned. However, given these unexpected school closures we may revisit the need for additional school days.
Q.	Will there be access to any school buildings during the March 16 - April 7, 2020 closure?
A.	The schools were open on Monday, March 16th, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for students to pick up any essential items. After that, all school buildings are being sanitized, cleaned and locked. Administrators will be working remotely.
Q.	How will the school community provide information on travel, health, and other important factors that will help us to determine our readiness to reopen?
A.	The district is currently working on a process to collect this information. Until further information becomes available please contact your building principal or direct supervisor.
Q.	Are our Boston (METCO) students being supported?
A.	Yes. Our METCO director, Grant Hightower, sent out a list of resources available in the city should families need and want to access them. They are not required to travel to Reading for these resources. Families should contact him directly if they need to as he will be regularly checking email at: grant.hightower@reading.k12.ma.us

Q.	Will food services be available for students that qualify for free and reduced lunch?
A.	<p>We want to make you aware that we will continue to offer grab and go meals for those RPS and NorthEast Metro Tech Students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. The meals will be available at the RMHS Cafeteria, at the door located under the bridge across from the field house, from 11 am-12 noon, beginning on Monday, March 16th. If you would like to participate, please sign up ahead of time by completing the link below:</p> <p>https://forms.gle/pzyL2aQgUmfQ1RHs8</p> <p>If you have any questions, please contact the Director of School Nutrition, Danielle Collins at danielle.collins@reading.k12.ma.us</p>
Q.	Will we receive reimbursement for the time missed for any tuitions or fees paid (i.e. Full Day Kindergarten, RISE, Athletics, Bus)?
A.	Once we return to school, we will reassess the impact of the time missed on the fees paid and communicate a plan to those families.
Q.	We are running low on my child’s medication at home, can we get the medication at school?
A.	We were open Monday, March 16th to get medication. Our buildings are now closed for cleaning. If you have an emergency and need to contact our director of nursing, Mary Giuliana, you may reach her at mary.giuliana@reading.k12.ma.us and we will see if we can get access that may be housed at schools. This may not be possible until our schools are reopened.
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Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 Resources and Support

Q. Should everyone be practicing social distancing?

A. Yes. “Now, we ask that you do your part. Creating social gatherings during the school outage will minimize the impact of closing school. Carefully consider the necessity of being together. This is not a vacation. It is an extreme measure to allow for social distancing so the virus is not spread. Not being exposed to the virus is the best way not to get sick. Please refer to this CDC webpage for other recommendations to prevent illness: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html>”

Q. How do I contact the Reading Board of Health?

A. Laura Vlasuk is the Town Hall Agent. You may contact her by clicking [HERE](#) or by phone at 781-942-6653.

Q. How can I find out more town information?

A. The town’s website is consistently updated with [the latest information here](#).

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