

READING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Frequently Asked Questions for COVID-19 School Closure

Updated: April 13, 2020

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Reading Public Schools and all school-related activities will be closed on March 16 and reopen on May 4, 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.

Resources and updates during this closure can be found at the Reading Public Schools COVID-19 Web Page at

<https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/covid-19-information/>.

When updates are made to this FAQ, we will send you the revised link via email, Blackboard Connect, Blogs, and other RPS social media platforms.

Click on the link below for the questions specific to:

[General Questions](#)

[Student Learning](#)

[Special Education/Student Support](#)

[Activities, Events, and Athletics](#)

[COVID-19 Resources and Support](#)

Frequently Asked Questions Student Learning

Q. Are the days during this closure counted as “school days?”

A. March 16th-20th were considered snow days as we developed our strategy and infrastructure for remote learning. “School days” began again on March 23rd. Including two days of school during April vacation (April 21 and 22), the Reading Public Schools

	will continue until Friday, June 19th.
Q.	Are there expectations around Distance and Online Learning Expectations for Students or Teachers?
A.	<p>Last week, the Reading Public Schools released the District Remote Learning Plan for the second phase of the closure. Each level also released a district remote learning plan which was very specific to their level. These plans, including optional resources and links by school level (PreK, each grade in elementary, middle school and high school) can 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.</p>
Q.	What optional resources are available for students to enrich learning during this period of closure?
A.	<p>We have 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 the closure, what happens with the MCAS test for students?
A.	<p>A few weeks ago, the United States Department of Education waived the state testing requirement for this year. In addition, last Friday, Governor Baker signed a law giving the Commissioner of Education authority to cancel or postpone the MCAS for this year. After Governor Baker's signing of the bill, Commissioner Jeff Riley announced that he is suspending the administration of the MCAS for this year.</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>
<p>Return to FAQs Menu</p>	

Frequently Asked Questions

Special Education/Student Support

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. On April 6th, Director of Student Services Dr. Jennifer Stys sent the following letter to parents regarding the second phase of the school closure and what that means for students with disabilities. That letter can be found [here](#). There was a follow up letter sent on April 14th, which can be found [here](#).

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 students eligible for compensatory services following these extended school closures?

A. DESE anticipates providing further guidance regarding compensatory/additional services before schools re-open in accordance with any further advice on this topic from the United States Department of Education. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has 30 days from the date the CARES act was signed (3/27/20) to provide her recommendations for flexibility regarding some IDEA requirements.

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.	<p>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 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?
Q.	How can the district meet special education evaluation timelines if schools are closed?
A.	<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. If you have any specific questions regarding a meeting please reach out to your Team Chairperson.</p>

Q.	Can parties get an extension on due process hearing timelines?
A.	<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> <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.</p>
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 meetings, as appropriate, to determine what type of impact the closure had on all student learning. Please refer to the following guidance , distributed by the United States Department of Education.
Q.	I'm not sure who my liaison is? What should I do?
A.	If you are not sure who your liaison is please email the special education Team Chairperson in your building. The list of Team Chairs can be found here .
Q.	No one has contacted me about my child since the emergency closure? What can I do?
A.	If you have not received any communication since the emergency closure, please email the special education Team Chairperson in your building. Team Chairperson emails can be found here .
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 United States Department of Education. Continuation of Learning Plans will be coming directly from the schools the students attend.
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 be provided during the closure and will be outlined in the Continuation of Learning Plan.
Q.	Will my child’s special education liaison, related service provider, and Team Chairperson be available if I have a question during this closure?
A.	Your child’s special education teacher, related service providers and Team Chairperson will be available for questions during the closure. The Assistant Director of Student Services and the Director of Student Services will be holding weekly office hours to address any specific concerns.
Q.	I am looking for general tips on how to support my child during this closure.
A.	An individual Continuation of Learning Plan is being written for every student who receives IEP services. This plan will contain general tips and resources on how to support your child during the closure as well as a schedule for remote learning.
Q.	What should I do about the deposit for R.I.S.E. tuition for next school year?
A.	We have extended the deadline for R.I.S.E tuition to April 27th. 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. If you have any questions please reach out to Denise Santoro denise.santoro@reading.k12.ma.us or Kelley Bostwick, R. I. S. E. Preschool Director. (Kelley.bostwick@reading.k12.ma.us)
Q.	Will my child receive home services during this time?
A.	Due to the closure and the social distancing requirement, we will not be providing in home direct services at this time, however, the district BCBAs are available for support and consultation as needed.
Q.	If I had a meeting prior to the closure when can I expect to receive the IEP/504?
A.	Teams are trying to complete all of the documents as soon as possible. Please contact your Team Chairperson with any specific questions or concerns. Team Chairperson emails can be found here .
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 Reading Public Schools hold IEP meetings during the emergency closure?
A.	RPS will be holding IEP meetings during the closure. You can expect to hear from your Team Chairperson regarding meeting scheduling. If you have any specific questions, Team Chairperson emails can be found here .
Q.	Can I expect an individual service/lesson (i.e.: a specialized reading program, discrete trial training, or a specialized program used by one of the related service providers) to be administered remotely during the closure?
A.	In these circumstances, services will be provided differently than they are when school is fully operational. Staff will continue to target IEP goal areas with learning activities designed to target those goals. Each child will be receiving a Continuation of Learning Plan which will outline the student’s services. If you have questions about this plan please contact your Team Chairperson. Team Chairperson emails can be found here .
Q.	Are students required to participate in special education services?
A.	RPS are giving families/students services and programming that they can and should access to the best of their family’s unique situation.
Q.	Will the special educator and related service provider (RSPs are Speech/Language Pathologists, OTs, PTs, Counselors/Psychologists) match the frequency and duration as provided in the IEP?
A.	In these circumstances, services will be provided differently than they are when school is fully operational. Service delivery will not ‘match’ all that is specified in the IEP.
Q.	How will summer services be addressed?
A.	While the Reading Public Schools is currently focused upon the immediate educational needs of students, we are also looking ahead to this summer and concurrently developing plans for summer programming. As this pandemic is novel with critical implications, we plan to follow further public health and governmental guidance regarding safety measures for students, staff and families in the coming weeks. We will provide more guidance in the upcoming weeks regarding summer services, ‘Extended School Year’ programs.
Q.	My child has significant disabilities. I’m not sure if online learning will be an option.

A.	Remote learning comes in many forms and is not always online learning. Your child's teacher/related service provider will work with you to plan several options.
Q.	How much time should I expect will be allocated for instruction and services?
A.	Frequency will vary depending on program and grade level. Adhering to state and district guidance, you can expect your child to receive a remote learning experience that encompasses half a day (approximately 3 hours). Please note: this is not all teacher directed. Students can engage in self-directed learning.
Q.	Can I record the lessons?
A.	Audio or video recording of online and/or telephonic lessons are not permitted without prior written authorization from the Reading Public Schools.
Q.	How will my child's social-emotional and/or behavioral needs be addressed during this time?
A.	Your child's service providers will work with you to address any concerns you may have about social-emotional/behavioral challenges.
Q.	Will my child receive office hours from their teacher every week?
A.	The staff is going to be available for questions and additional support. Not all of the staff will be holding 'office hours 'weekly, but will be able to schedule individual times to provide support.
Q.	Will my child receive direct teletherapy from Speech and Language, OT and PT?
A.	At this point, our main service delivery model will not include universal teletherapy. However, we will continue to work with families and staff to identify the appropriate models to students and families.
Q.	Is consent required to provide support and services remotely?
A.	No. According to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, consent is not required. The remote continuation of learning plans are not a replacement of IEPs, but a tool to provide ongoing educational services during this unprecedented time of the pandemic crisis.

Q.	Will the Team reconvene to make changes to the IEP?
A.	No. DESE has stated that there is not a need to reconvene the Team and make changes to the IEP during this closure.
Q.	Will the Continuation of Learning Plan service delivery models change the IEP or impact “stay put” rights?
A.	This does not change the IEP or impact “stay put” rights.
Q.	When can I expect to see my child’s Progress Report?
A.	At this point, report cards at the middle school and high school levels will be sent out at the end of the year combining Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 and will include progress reports. Elementary report cards were just administered with progress report information prior to our school closure. We will determine whether end of the year report cards and progress reports at the elementary level will be administered based on when we get a return date.
Q.	Are the technology platforms (i.e.; Microsoft TEAMS) secure?
A.	Microsoft TEAMS provides a more secure educational environment. RPS has an education license with Microsoft Teams, which gives us privacy protections. Because we have this license, it is protected under the guidelines of the Children Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule (COPPA) . In order to keep our students and staff safe and the only tool that we have that allows us to safely videoconference is Microsoft Teams. We do not have an educational license for Facetime or additional platforms.
Q.	My child still does not have a device or access to the internet. How will he/she/they receive this?
A.	<p>If your student does not have a device or access to the internet, please contact your child’s principal. We will be able to provide an appropriate technology device for families that do not have access to a device.</p> <p>For families that do not have wifi in their homes, Comcast is offering free WiFi for everyone, with hotspots available to all, including non-Xfinity subscribers. To access the service, look for the “xfinitywifi” network name in a list of hotspots. For more information, go to www.xfinity.com/wifi .You can also receive free internet services for 60 days and then it’s \$9.95 per month after that if you qualify. (In order to qualify to pay just \$9.95 per month, you must be eligible for public assistance programs such as National School Lunch Program, Housing Assistance, Medicaid,SNAP, SSI, and others.) Please read</p>

	<p>more at this link:</p> <p>https://www.internetessentials.com/</p>
Q.	I don't know how to use technology? Will RPS offer guidance and training for parents.?
A.	If you have questions about the technology needed, please contact your child's principal and they will coordinate technology support with members of the Instructional Technology Team.
Q.	MCAS is part of the competency determination for graduating high school. What will that look like for students graduating?
A.	We received word on April 10th that MCAS has been cancelled for this year. RPS is still waiting for guidance from the state DESE about what if any implication there may be on MCAS as part of graduation requirements.
Q.	If students fall behind in high school (in order to pass the MCAS for the following year), how will RPS provide the necessary content and instruction to close the gap?
A.	RPS teachers are doing everything possible to target the most essential content/concepts for learning activities during this emergency closure. When schools reopen, we will provide further guidance as to how staff will address the gap (if any) that may have impacted your student during this time. Additionally, members of the Special Education department will be working with curriculum leaders to review curriculum choices and compacting of content that may need to occur for next year.
Q.	What is the status of my child's MCAS ALT.?
A.	The MCAS Alt has been cancelled for this year.
Q.	Will work assigned remotely during the closure be graded (either by general educators or special educators)?
A.	At this time, the district is NOT grading any assignments. Students will not be penalized for not completing work. Students are expected to work on assignments. Families should reach out to their teacher/liaisons if completion of work if students are unable to participate for any reason. Please refer to the remote learning plan for your child's grade level for more specific information. These can be found here .

Q. Is there a support group I can join or a way I can connect with families to share and learn about resources during this time?

A. For more information about groups and networking with other families, please contact our SEPAC directly. If you are not already part of the SEPAC community, you may reach out by sending an email to sepacreading@gmail.com, by following SEPAC on Facebook and set preferences to ensure that you see SEPAC's updates, or by visiting SEPAC's website for information that they sent out earlier in the crisis.

For additional support around Mental or Behavioral Health services and where to access resources please reach out to our District Behavioral Health Coach Lauren Sabella SAC, LMHC. by emailing her directly at lauren.sabella@reading.k12.ma.us Information about the District Behavioral Health Coach can be found [here](#).

Additionally, Dr. Doherty included the following resources in a communication of how families may access support:

- Contact your behavioral health provider to see if they can schedule a telehealth visit. Telehealth is a virtual therapy session. Many providers are now offering this option.
- Contact Samaritans 24/7. Call or text our 24/7 helpline any time at 1-877-870-4673.
- Contact Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741
- Visit the new Massachusetts Network of Care website to locate behavioral health resources in your area.
- Contact SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline. The Helpline provides 24/7, 365-day-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
- Contact the Massachusetts Emergency Services Program/Mobile Crisis Intervention (ESP/MCI) – 1-877-382-1609 (read more about this program)
- Interface : 888-244-6843 for resource information and/or provider referrals from a mental health professional.
- Elliot Crisis

: <http://www.eliotchs.org/services/outpatient-services/emergency-services/>

- Mental Health and Well Being Partners:

<https://sites.google.com/arlington.k12.ma.us/mentalhealthandwellbeing/partners>

- Reading Coalition for Prevention and Support :Visit the website for resources and services available. <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/readingcoalition>

[Return to FAQs Menu](#)

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 is continuing to monitor the situation and will be providing updates on their website, located here .
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.	Registration for the 2020/2021 Extended Day has re-opened! We have limited space available. Information regarding the Extended Day registration process and registration forms can be found at: https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/departments/extended-day-program/ . Please email completed registration form to Richard Belmonte, Richard.belmonte@readingk12.ma.us or to Chris.Nelson@readingk12.ma.us. 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 school closure count against school days?
A.	With the exception of March 16-20, all other days have counted as school days. Currently, the last day of school is Friday, June 19, 2020. We will continue to monitor the situation.
Q.	Currently the schools are closed through May 4, 2020. Will this be extended? How will we be notified?
A.	Governor Baker has ordered all schools to be closed through May 4, 2020. We will most likely hear an update from the Governor over the next week or two as to whether or not the closure will be extended. 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.	The Reading Public Schools will be in virtual session on Tuesday, April 21st and Wednesday, April 22nd. There will not be any remote learning on Thursday, April 23rd and Friday, April 24th.
Q.	Will there be access to any school buildings during the current school closure?
A.	All schools are now closed. The only areas that are open are the Reading Public Schools Administration offices (for mail and package delivery) and the Reading Memorial High School Cafeteria entrance for food and technology distribution. All other Administrators and staff 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 need it. 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, on designated days. 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.	<p>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. The Reading School Committee and the Central Office Administration are currently reviewing options.</p>
Q.	We are running low on my child's medication at home, can we get the medication at school?
A.	<p>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.</p>
<p>Return to FAQs Menu</p>	

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](#).

[Return to FAQs Menu](#)