

COVID-19: Information & Guidance for State Charter Schools

MAY 21, 2020

State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia



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Introduction

To consolidate resources and existing information, the SCSC has compiled this document which will be updated daily and hosted on the SCSC website. This document provides links to key external resources, incorporates ever-evolving updates from the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and U.S. Department of Education (US Ed), and includes specific resources and guidance in response to questions from state charter schools. **New or updated material will appear in red.** Additionally, SCSC staff may periodically remove outdated information or re-organize the document so that it remains accurate and user friendly.

Federal Resources

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

- The CDC routinely updates its website with COVID-19 guidance. Please visit the CDC website for updated information [here](#). Here's a quick link to the CDC's [Fact Sheets](#) in several languages for parents and others regarding COVID-19.
- The CDC released [new guidance](#) on precautions for essential workers.
- The CDC developed a series of American Sign Language videos that offer important information about COVID-19. The videos are [here](#).
- The CDC released guidance for persons living in close quarters and guidance for taking care of someone with COVID-19 at home. More information can be found by visiting the links below.
 - [CDC: Guidance for Those Living in Close Quarters](#)
 - [CDC: Guidance for Care Givers](#)
- CDC released guidance for cleaning and disinfecting facilities, including schools, when reopening. Guidance can be found at the link [here](#).
- The CDC updated its [guidance](#) for caring for children.

U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Ed)

- Schools may refer to the U.S. Ed website at ed.gov/coronavirus for COVID-19 ("Coronavirus") Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel.

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- The U.S. Ed. released a [Fact Sheet](#) on the Impact of Covid-19 on Assessments & Accountability under ESSA. Further information specific to Georgia is included below.
 - The U.S. Ed. released [FAQs](#) on complying with FERPA during the COVID-19 public health crisis.
 - The Privacy & Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) released [guidance](#) on protecting student privacy while using online educational services.
 - The U.S. Ed. recently conducted a webinar focused on virtual learning/FERPA requirements. [Click here](#) to view the presentation.
 - The U.S. Ed. released [guidance](#) related to use of Department of Education Grant Funds during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The U.S. Ed. authorizes the donation or loan of personal protective equipment and other medical supplies and equipment purchased with federal funds. Additional guidance can be found [here](#).
 - The U.S. Ed. announced \$3 Billion in Emergency Education Block Grants for Governors. For more information, including Georgia's allocation, see further details [here](#).
 - The U.S. Ed. released new Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) guidance, resources, training and tools for Education Agencies through the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center. The REMS website can be accessed [here](#). Resources include:
 - The [REMS TA Center Community of Practice \(CoP\)](#), which is a virtual space for education agencies to collaborate and learn from the experiences of others in the field.
 - [“Ensuring Continuity of Teaching and Learning During Prolonged Absences, Dismissals, and Closures”](#) publication that addresses continuity of operations annexes, key considerations for continuity of teaching and learning, and educator tools to support distance education.
 - Guidance related to emergency operations plans (EOPs), including an [In-Depth Planning for Infectious Diseases Online Course](#) and [Planning for Infectious Disease Training Materials](#).
 - The U.S. Ed. announced more than \$300 million in discretionary grant funds will be available for states to use to create adaptable, innovative learning

opportunities for K-12 and postsecondary learners in response to the COVID-19 national emergency. The grants will be funded through the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF), authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Read more at the news release [here](#).

- The U.S. Ed. released [guidance](#) about how to serve migratory children during COVID-19.
- The U.S. Ed. released [guidance on providing services to English Learners during the COVID-19 outbreak](#).

CARES Act Resources

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law by President Trump on March 27, 2020. The bill provides \$2 trillion in economic stimulus funds. Specific portions of the CARES Act that may provide relief for charter schools include:

- The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (\$13.23 billion). These funds will flow directly to LEAs (including state charters) based on Title I allocations. Funds can be used for a variety of purposes including providing technology and connectivity to support online learning due to long-term school closures. Georgia's application for CARES Act funds has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education and funds will be available for schools following State Board of Education approval. Specific allocations were sent directly to schools. CARES Act Allocations have been finalized. Please review the [allocation sheet](#). GaDOE released an updated CARES Act FAQ [here](#).
- The SBOE approved the GaDOE Superintendent's recommendation to accept and allocate the K-12 CARES Act funding. The SBOE items can be found [here](#). An infographic is attached [here](#).
- [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) Low or No-Cost Lending Programs for 501c3 Organizations:
 - Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans to cover up to eight weeks of payroll expenses. More information is available through the U.S. Small Business Administration website.
 - Economic Injury Disaster Loans to cover accounts payable, debts, payroll, and other bills the coronavirus has affected the school's ability to pay.

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- On April 8, 2020, the U.S. Department of Treasury updated its [FAQ document](#) for the Paycheck Protection Program Loans. Additional third-party resources are located in the “Other Resources for State Charter Schools” section of this document.
 - The following [Payroll Protection Program Update](#) is provided exclusively for convenience and informational purposes. Schools should consult independent legal counsel before relying on the information herein as a basis for pursuing support under the Payroll Protection Program (PPP). The SCSC has determined that this information may be useful to schools; however, the SCSC does not certify the accuracy, legality or content of this information. Further, the SCSC does not endorse any product, service, or opinion(s) of any corporation, organization, or individual.
 - The U.S. Department of Treasury updated its [PPP loan guidance](#) on May 6, 2020.
 - The SBA and Department of the Treasury have released the application for loan forgiveness for the Paycheck Protection Program. The application allows loan recipients to request loan forgiveness at the conclusion of the eight-week covered period, which begins with the disbursement of their loans. The application and instructions can be found [here](#).

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

- The FBI released Guidance on Defending Against VTC Hijacking and Zoom-bombing. Recommendations can be found [here](#).
- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) the following recommendations as this issue is not specific to Zoom, but rather applies to all video conferencing (VTC) software:
 - Consider security requirements when selecting vendors. For example, if end-to-end encryption is necessary, does the vendor offer it?
 - Ensure VTC software is up to date.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act

- The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions will apply from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. Please visit the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division [website](#) for additional information and [FAQs](#). NOTE: Public employers and government entities, including state charter schools, must display [this poster](#).
- The U.S. Department of Labor ended its period of nonenforcement of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The agency provided an initial period of nonenforcement until April 20 to allow impacted stakeholders to receive guidance without penalty.

State Resources

From the Governor's Office

- Governor Kemp issued and [Executive Order](#) on May 12, 2020 providing additional guidance for reviving a healthy Georgia in response to COVID-19. A specific section regarding summer camps is listed [here](#).
- Governor Kemp recorded a special message for the graduates of 2020 that can be shared on social media and during virtual graduation ceremonies. Click [here](#) to view and share.
- Per the Governor's Office, please check with your local health departments regarding guidance for holding in-person graduation ceremonies and other large events.
- Governor Kemp issued an [Executive Order](#) on April 30, 2020 extending the public health emergency and extending the shelter in place order for some individuals.
- Governor Kemp issued an [Executive Order](#) on April 1, 2020 closing all public K-12 schools for the remainder of the school year to combat the spread of COVID-19. Essential functions and online/distance learning may continue. Additionally, minimal staff can continue to report to sustain core functions/services, such as providing food services and supporting digital/distance learning efforts.

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- A list of Executive Orders from the Governor, including flexibility to open for certain businesses and an executive order mandating isolation/quarantine for at-risk persons and a restriction of gatherings of more than 10 people is available [here](#).
 - On March 26, 2020, Governor Kemp hosted a virtual town hall to address the statewide response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The event recording may be viewed on [Georgia Public Broadcasting](#).
 - The Governor has announced a partnership with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to expand access to High Speed Internet for Georgians working or learning from home during COVID-19 via the [Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative](#).
 - Governor Kemp announced expanded availability of testing for Georgians through a partnership with Walmart and ETrueNorth. Georgians in Augusta, Milledgeville and Tifton can now make an appointment at [www.DoINeedCOVID19Test.com](#). On-site scheduling will also be available.

Georgia Department of Public Health

- The Georgia Department of Public Health updates its [COVID-19 Status Report](#) webpage each day at 12:00 pm. and 7:00 p.m.
- The State of Georgia has a COVID-19 hotline: [\(844\) 442-2681](#)
 - The Georgia Department of Public Health asks: “If you believe that you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to the novel coronavirus, please contact your primary care doctor, an urgent care clinic, or your local federally qualified healthcare center. Please do not show up unannounced at an emergency room or health care facility.”
- DPH issued an [order](#) for isolation for individuals with COVID-19 or those who have come into contact with them/ suspected contact.
- DPH published an [interactive map](#) showing Public Wi-Fi locations to help those working or learning from home during COVID-19.
- DPH released new [guidance](#) for schools to use in managing the pick-up of essential items from the school setting by families and students.
- DPH released new [recommendations](#) for using cloth face coverings.

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

- The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities launched the Georgia Covid-19 Emotional Support Line. The phone number is 866-399-8938. Additional details and resources are listed on the [flyer](#).

Georgia Division of Family & Children Services

To limit the spread of COVID-19 and assist families, the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) requests that families with school-age children be allowed and encouraged to use district-issued student devices to access SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Medicaid or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) applications and information remotely.

To facilitate this, DFCS asks that the following websites remain unblocked on student devices:

- **Gateway:** <https://gateway.ga.gov> (Customers may apply for Food Stamp and Medicaid Benefits online via the Georgia Gateway portal)
- **DFCS Website:** <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/services> (Customers are able to view program guidelines and download an application for benefits)
- **EBT:** <https://www.connectebt.com/gaebtclient/> (Customers can access information regarding Electronic Benefit Transfer [EBT] accounts)

DFCS requests that Superintendents work with their Information Technology offices to ensure that these sites can be accessed from student devices, and if necessary, provide access when needed. DFCS is amending operations to ensure that they can continue to support vulnerable Georgians in this difficult time.

Communications school districts can share with schools and parents.

- Georgia WIC has temporarily expanded allowable products in response to fluctuations in availability of products in stores. Find more information [here](#).

Georgia Department of Education

General Information

- Please refer to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) website at gadoe.org/coronavirus for guidance and resources.
- The State Board of Education adopted a series of waivers to support LEAs with their COVID-19 pandemic response. Click [here](#) for additional information. GaDOE also released [guidance](#) regarding this package of waivers. Among other topics, this guidance touches on grading/course completion, promotion/retention, graduation requirements, and assessment and accountability.
- Governor Kemp’s Executive Order closing all K-12 public schools for the remainder of the year did not set a statewide end date for schools – that remains a local decision.
- Please report distance learning end dates if they differ from your scheduled last day. Also, report if your school calendar changes (i.e. end date is moved earlier). Notify Garry McGiboney at gmcgiboney@doe.k12.ga.us or Lauren Holcomb at lauren.holcomb@scsc.georgia.gov of any changes.
- GaDOE expanded its [COVID-19 website](#) to include CARES Act resources, FAQs, and more.
- GaDOE released a Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) Contract Guidance [FAQ](#) for those who operate a GLRS. Additional questions should be emailed to lacross@doe.k12.ga.us.
- GaDOE announced that while they are not involved in the accreditation process, they have communicated with Cognia regarding the need for additional flexibility for AdvanceED/Cognia Reviews. More information is forthcoming.
- On Tuesday, May 5, at 2:15 p.m., GaDOE hosted a webinar to go over key elements of the CARES Act. Here’s a link to the [CARES Act webinar recording](#).
- The GaDOE provided [a list](#) of Georgia PPE Suppliers.
- The GaDOE announced that the U.S. Ed approved an extension of its ESSA waiver. **Students assessed with the alternate assessment who earn a regular diploma will continue to count for graduation rate calculations.** Additionally, GaDOE now has permission to reassign students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who would be eligible for the State-defined alternate diploma and who remain in school – but are currently under the regular diploma

policy – **to a future cohort** so that they will count toward the four-year cohort graduation rate, regardless of the year they receive their diploma – provided they graduate within the time period for which the state ensures the availability of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. In Georgia, this is when a student has reached age 22. GaDOE’s accountability team will go over the details during the Cohort Withdrawal Update application webinar this summer. For questions, contact the GaDOE’s [accountability team](#).

- GaDOE announced that in addition to the CARES Act funding for districts, it’ll be recommending supplemental funding to support students in GNETS for SBOE approval at next week’s scheduled board meeting. The recommended allocations are [here](#).
- GaDOE announced that it will recommend at the June SBOE meeting an extension of blanket waivers through the 2020-2021 school year. GaDOE will be advocating for additional flexibility from requirements in state and federal statutes by working with the legislature, U.S. Ed, and congressional delegation.
- GaDOE announced that the State Board of Education (SBOE) approved several action items and GaDOE presented several measures at its May 15 meeting.
- They are as follows:
 - The SBOE approved the recommendation from Superintendent Woods for additional supplemental funding for GNETS programs. Click [here](#) for allocations.
 - The SBOE approved [additional statewide waivers](#) regarding reporting and training. Superintendent Woods will recommend at the June SBOE meeting that statewide waivers be extended through the 2020-2021 school year.
 - Under the Superintendent’s Report, GaDOE outline the impact of the proposed 14% reduction to the agency’s budget as well as strategies adopted agency-wide to adhere to these planned reductions. Click [here](#) for the presentation.
- GaDOE released a document with new information regarding COVID-19. The document can be viewed [here](#).

Curriculum

- Distance learning resources:
 - [GPB & GaDOE PSA Video](#)
 - [Georgia Home Classroom](#)
 - Provides Georgia students and educators access to an online library of free educational resources from GPB Education, PBS LearningMedia, and Discovery Education, including videos, activities, and associated lesson plans for teachers, that align with Georgia standards. In addition to Pre-K through 5th grade resources, Grades 6 - 12 resources and daily show schedules/education activity guides are now available.
 - GPB Education Also Offers Daily E-Learning Newsletter During School Closures: [Click here](#) to sign-up
 - Georgia Virtual Learning – [Free Minicourse for Teachers](#)
 - GaDOE's [Georgia Virtual School](#) is holding/recording a series of content-specific webinar trainings for teachers. [Wide Open School](#) provides open educational resources, games, activities, shows, and movies for educators and parents.
 - Summer enrollment for Georgia Virtual Summer Courses is open and available for students to catch up on credits or get ahead for next school year. For more information, contact: Margaret Thomas at margaret.thomas@gavirtualschool.org. See [attached](#).
- Digital Learning Grant

The GaDOE Office of School Improvement offered a Digital Learning Grant. The Title I Section 1003 School Improvement Digital Learning Grant provides financial resources to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) on behalf of schools identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), and CSI Promise schools as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). An informational webinar recording is available [here](#). The maximum grant period for a Digital Learning Grant is April 24, 2020 through September 30, 2021 subject to the continued availability of funds and the grantee meeting all outlined requirements. All goods and services must be received and purchases for this budget period must be allocated by August 30, 2021. No applications will be considered after the deadline. If you have

questions, please contact Atlanta Office Program Manager Amy Alderman, at aalderman@doe.k12.ga.us or (404) 308-2503.

- The Georgia Seal of Biliteracy and International Skills Diploma Seal Programs released updated guidance regarding seal deadlines and procedures for spring 2020. Please see this [document](#) for further details.
- GaDOE released additional Georgia Virtual School resources to assist districts with virtual learning. Resources are listed below. If there are any questions, contact Margaret Thomas by email at margaret.thomas@gavirtualschool.org
 - **Georgia Virtual School (GaVS)** will provide access to its Mastery Course Completion, through June 15. Enrollment for this program, which will have limited space, begins April 15. More information can be found on the [document here](#). Visit <http://www.gacreditrecovery.org> for more information.
 - **Free Professional Learning:** Three free courses are available to assist teachers with the transition to online/distance learning. In addition to the courses on Digital Learning Days and Online Support for Students with Disabilities rolled out in March, a new Introduction to Synchronous Learning course is available. [Click here](#) to access the courses.
 - **Content-Specific Webinars:** GaVS is also offering free, content- and course-specific webinars for teachers and teams. Visit the link [here](#) for a schedule of upcoming webinars and recordings of completed webinars.
 - **Grade Posting Flexibility:** For schools with students enrolled in GaVS courses, there will be flexibility for grade postings to ensure district's requirements are met for final posting. All GaVS courses' final grade posting will be May 12. Additional information was provided to the GaVS coordinators in each district.
 - **GaVS Summer Availability:** Registration for GaVS' summer semester is currently open, and there is plenty of availability. [Click here](#) for more information.

Assessment

Elementary & Secondary Education State Testing & Related Activities

The following assessment activities are waived:

- State assessment window/administration (including Georgia Milestones EOGs/EOCs, GAA, and all other required testing);
- Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) administration;
- Teacher and leader evaluation (TKES/LKES) requirements and reporting; and
- Attendance-related consequences (including CCRPI, TKES/LKES, Star Climate Rating, and make-up day requirements).

GaDOE received a [letter from Secretary DeVos](#) regarding ESSA flexibility with regard to state testing and accountability. GaDOE sought and was preliminarily granted all waivers afforded by USED. On March 27, 2020, GaDOE received [notice](#) that the waiver request was formally approved.

Additional resources related to state testing and accountability:

- The GaDOE Assessment & Accountability team hosted a webinar on Thursday, April 2nd at 11 a.m. to review updates to Georgia's assessment and accountability plan for 2020 and answer questions. You can view the webinar [here](#).
- The Georgia Department of Education Assessment Division compiled a [FAQ document](#) to address common questions related to the current COVID-19 health crisis.
- GaDOE announced a new formative assessment resource mapped to Georgia's standards. Beginning next school year (2020-2021), all districts will have access to DRC BEACON, a through-year computer adaptive interim assessment system for grades 3-8 in English language arts and mathematics.
- GaDOE hosted a webinar on April 21 that provided an overview of BEACON. You can watch the webinar here: [Overview of DRC BEACON Formative Resource Webinar](#). Additional details about BEACON are included on this [document here](#).
- GaDOE announced the summer administration of the EOC has been cancelled. Districts will be able to utilize the August mid-month administration in lieu of the summer window. GaDOE released an updated [FAQ](#) with further details.

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- The SBOE-approved waiver of the 20% EOC requirement applies to any students who complete an EOC-required course during the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year (spring/summer 2020) and were expected to participate in the EOC during the Spring or Summer 2020 EOC windows. See the attached [FAQ](#).

Course Grades

- **‘Pass/Fail’ allowed for K-8 subjects/courses**

Q: Can districts choose to assign “pass/fail” to students in grades K-8 rather than assign a numerical grade in response to school closures?

Each local board of education is required to establish 70 as the minimum passing score for all subjects/courses taught in grades 4-12. Working within those parameters, local districts may determine the requirements for content mastery, course completion, and final grades for their students.

Yes, for subjects/courses taught in grades K-8, districts may choose to issue course designations of “pass” or “fail” in lieu of final grades or numeric scores, as long as 70 is established as the minimum passing score in grades 4-8. This option is not available for high school subjects/courses, including high school subjects/courses taught in middle school for high school credit. All subjects/courses for grades 9-12, including those courses that are taught in middle school for high school credit, shall have numerical grades of students in all courses for which credit is given in those courses.

- The Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) will honor district-determined grading policies for high school students. As stated in GaDOE guidance, it is a requirement that districts assign final numerical grades for all high school courses; GSFC will use those grades for GPA calculations. GSFC released [a FAQ](#) with further details.

TKES/LKES

- All TKES/LKES evaluations have been suspended for the remainder of 2019-2020 school year. GaDOE and GaPSC provide additional guidance with a [FAQ](#).

Post-Secondary Education Testing & Admissions

- As College Board and ACT have suspended upcoming testing dates indefinitely, the University System of Georgia (USG) has approved a temporary adjustment to admissions criteria that will allow institutions to admit students without ACT or SAT scores. Guidance is available [here](#).
- The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) is suspending placement exam requirements for admission to summer and fall 2020 classes. The system is also suspending the requirement to submit a high school transcript or equivalency transcript in addition to waiving the requirement that students must submit scores on the ACCUPLACER exam.
- The Georgia Student Finance Commission released updates to the Zell Miller Scholarship. Requirements for this scholarship are set in state law. Students with SAT/ACT scores on file can meet Zell Miller Scholarship eligibility requirements; GSFC is working with SAT/ACT providers for possible options for summer testing administrations.

International Baccalaureate (IB Testing)

- The May 2020 examinations, as scheduled between 30 April and 22 May, for Diploma Programme and Career-related Programme students will no longer be held.
- Depending on what they registered for, the student will be awarded a Diploma or a Course Certificate which reflects their standard of work. This is based on student's coursework and the established assessment expertise, rigor, and quality control already built into the programmes.
- Full details and FAQs will be posted on IB's [website](#).
- Parent letter template is [available here](#).

CTAE

- All BRIDGE bill requirements and End of Pathway Assessments (EOPAs) administration are suspended until further notice.
- **Perkins V CLNA Submission Extended.** Based on additional flexibility provided by USED, the Georgia Department of Education is extending the original May 15,

2020 deadline for the completion of the Perkins V CLNA and the Local Application submission by three months (August 15, 2020).

State CTAE Grants are still due on May 15, 2020. GaDOE does not have sole authority over state grant deadlines. Given the uncertain state budget outlook, please consider drawing down state grant funding. Additional guidance can be found at the [document here](#).

- GaDOE announced the FY20 Vocational Construction Equipment and/or Agriculture Construction Equipment grant deadline extended to September 30.
- GaDOE provided additional flexibility regarding CTAE Diploma Seal criteria. See the [FAQ](#) for additional details.

Agricultural Education

- GaDOE released [guidance](#) regarding Program of Work for Agricultural Education.

Federal Programs

- GaDOE hosted a webinar on April 15, 2020 to discuss federal programs updates. The agenda included information regarding the CARES Act, ESSA Flexibilities, EdFlex, and the revised FY21 CLIP. The recording and the presentation are available here: [recording](#); [presentation](#).
- As a reminder, the GaDOE is suspending all cross-functional monitoring and program monitoring activities for the rest of the school year. If your LEA has completed preparation for monitoring, you may choose to keep the scheduled date. Please email jwright@doe.k12.ga.us if you wish to keep this scheduled date.
- The FY20 CLIP will be extended all the way through FY21 with no updates required by GaDOE unless requested by the LEA.
- Federal Programs (ESSA & IDEA) FAQs
 - [Overarching ESSA and IDEA Programs](#)
 - [FY21 Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan \(CLIP\)](#)
 - [FY20 Cross Functional Monitoring \(CFM\) and Program Monitoring \(McKinney-Vento; 21st CCLC\)](#)
 - [Title I, Part A Including Family Engagement](#)

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- [Foster Care Education Provisions under Title I, Part A](#)
 - [Title I, Part A 1003 School Improvement](#)
 - [Title I, Part C](#)
 - [Title II, Part A](#)
 - [Title III, Part A](#)
 - [State English to Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\) Program](#)
 - [Title IV, Part A](#)
 - [Title IV, Part B 21st Century Community Learning Centers \(21st CCLC\)](#)
 - [Individual with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)
 - [Equitable Services for Private School](#)
 - GaDOE released Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) and Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) Guidance Updates regarding COVID-19 School Closures. More details are listed on the [document here](#).
 - **Georgia Seeks Additional Federal Waivers**
Superintendent Woods submitted another round of waiver requests to USED, including:
 - Eliminating the carryover limits for Title I, Part A (beyond 15%)
 - Extending the period of availability/use of current carryover federal funds through 2021
 - Suspending identified Title IV requirements (including the needs assessment for 2019-2020 school year, content area spending requirements, and 15% limit to purchase technology), and
 - Waiving the definition of professional development (for the 2019-2020 school year)

GNETS Federal Grant Carryover Cap Lifted

- GaDOE suspended the carryover limit for the GNETS federal grant for this year. GaDOE will allow 100% carryover for the FY20 GNETS federal grant.

21st Century Carryover Cap Removed

- GaDOE waived the annual 15% carryover percentage limitation for FY20 Title, IV, Part B – 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) subgrants. 21st CCLC subgrantees are permitted to carryover all unexpended funds from FY20 into FY21.

Special Education

- The Division for Special Education Services and Supports, is working diligently to release guidance specific to students with disabilities. Additional guidance is expected from USED's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) that will inform further information.
 - For general questions, please reference the [following resources](#) from OSEP.
 - **USED Shares Additional Guidance – Serving Students with Disabilities.** USED released additional guidance related to serving students with disabilities via distance/virtual learning ([click here](#)) during the COVID-19 crisis. We will continue to update you as this issue evolves.
 - For questions specific to individual students with disabilities, please contact zsmith@doe.k12.ga.us, spedhelpdesk@doe.k12.ga.us, or your Special Education District Liaison. You may access the Special Education District Liaison List using the following link: [GLRS DL Map](#).
 - For questions regarding students at the State Schools, please contact kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us or jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us.
- Local school systems required to submit documentation for the FY20 Disproportionality Compliance Review will have flexibility to submit this documentation through June 30. If your local school system is prepared to submit the documentation for the Disproportionality Compliance Review, you may opt to move forward in this manner.
- The Special Education Parent Satisfaction survey will remain available through June 30, 2020.
- Per OSEP's guidance, if your local school system is implementing an alternate mode of instructional delivery (i.e. virtual/distance learning) for all students, then you are not required to amend the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- IEP Team meetings can be held virtually, if appropriate.
- Many of you have expressed a need for flexibility based on several IDEA requirements such as timely evaluations, IEPs in place by age 3, expiring IEPs, initial IEPs, formal complaint timelines, etc. GaDOE will reach out to USED to

seek any flexibility that can be provided for these areas and encourage you to focus on meeting the needs of students, teachers, and leaders.

- Discussions are being held to discuss SST questions and information will be shared as soon as possible.
- [Information](#) Regarding Online Education and Web Accessibility
- **Serving Students with Disabilities (Free Online Course for Educators)** – this is a free online course, developed by GaDOE’s Georgia Virtual School, opened to all Georgia educators to support them in meeting the needs of students with disabilities through distance learning. [Click here](#) to access this course.
- The GaDOE Special Education Division hosted a Special Education Services and Supports webinar on Friday, April 3 at 1:00 pm. The presentation slides can be accessed [here](#).
- GaDOE issued clarification on Individualized Digital Learning Plans:
Though LEAs must document the provision of FAPE and access to the curriculum for individual students with disabilities, **individualized digital learning plans for students with disabilities are not state or federally required**. There is no state or federal requirement that IEPs be amended to include an individualized digital learning plan as long as the provision of FAPE and access to the curriculum are documented. You should consider specific accommodations and services provided to students with disabilities during COVID-19 school closures and any additional LEA needs to transition to extended distance/remote learning opportunities during the upcoming school year. You must document interim **good faith efforts** to provide services, but the decision to utilize an individualized digital learning plan to meet this requirement is at the **sole discretion of local districts and IEP teams**.

Data Collections

If you have questions concerning the FTE, CPI and Student Class data collection activities, please email Levette Williams at lewillia@doe.k12.ga.us or you may email Kathy Aspy at kaspy@doe.k12.ga.us.

School Nutrition

GaDOE received word from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that two waivers have been approved to extend alternate meal service flexibility in the case of extended closures due to COVID-19.

This will allow schools to serve students' meals through USDA-approved meal service options, at state-approved sites within the community. Local students can go to open area sites to receive meals. Meal sites operating under this waiver will not be closed to children age 18 and under. GaDOE has advised that the emergency nutrition programs offered by districts need to be "open" (like a summer school programs) meaning any student that resides in the local district can receive meals. State charters that offer nutrition programs are also eligible to implement a program with the approval of GaDOE.

[Employee Safety Guidance for School Nutrition Programs During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) is being sent to all school nutrition directors.

GaDOE also issued a [School Nutrition Program FAQ document](#).

Due to a recently awarded USDA waiver, Georgia can now allow local SFA's to submit their plan to manage pick up of meals by parents and/or guardians without the presence of children, based on specific criteria. GaDOE is finalizing the development of an application model (a requirement of USDA). The application, along with detailed guidance, will be shared with districts soon.

School Facilities

CDC released [updated guidance](#) on cleaning and disinfecting facilities.

Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations (March 21, 2020)

School Finance

The Georgia Department of Education Financial Review Division compiled a [FAQ document](#) to address common questions related to the current COVID-19 health crisis.

Among the questions was, “Will the budget requirements set forth in O.C.G.A. §20-2-167(a)(5) and §20-2-167.1 be waived for FY 2021?” In response, the GaDOE states that “[t]he requirements to adopt a balanced budget in order to operate are still in effect.” Further, according to the [FAQ document](#) state charter schools must follow the budget requirements set forth in O.C.G.A. §20- 2-167(a)(5) and §20-2-167.1.

Notably, O.C.G.A. §20-2-167.1 requires the governing boards for state charter schools to “hold at least two public meetings, which shall not occur within the same week, for the purpose of providing an opportunity for public input on its proposed annual operating budget before adopting any budget.”

State charter schools may “pass a Budget Resolution for each month in FY 2021 until a balanced budget is adopted. The GaDOE Financial Management Handbook for Georgia’s Local Units of Administration (FMGLUA), Section IV – Chapter 2, includes details on passing a Budget Resolution for each month of the fiscal year until an annual budget is adopted. Please see full [chapter here](#).

- The House Budget Office published a [report](#) outlining the impact of COVID-19.

Annual Budget Hearing Guidance

1. Are governing boards required to hold at least two public meetings for proposed amendments to state charter school FY20 annual operating budgets?

Yes. Consistent with [guidance](#) issued by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), governing boards must hold at least two public meetings on the school’s annual operating budget. As expressed in the SCSC [Legal Obligations Guidance](#), the requirement to hold public hearings on the school’s annual budget also applies to budget amendments. Thus, if a school’s governing board proposes to amend its FY20 budget, it must do so consistent with the notice requirements in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1.

2. Can governing boards hold FY20 annual budget amendment hearings virtually given Executive Orders responsive to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

Generally, the SCSC interprets the requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1 consistent with those of the Georgia Open Meetings Act. Except in the case of certain schools with state-wide attendance zones, the language of the provision contemplates, but does not explicitly state, that annual budget hearings occur in-person. The SCSC has previously required annual budget hearings or amendments to be conducted via in-person public meetings. However, given the public health emergency, should a governing board determine that emergency circumstances exist as defined by the Georgia Open Meetings Act, O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 (d) and (g), the SCSC will conclude that a governing board that holds the two public hearings virtually has met its legal obligations; provided, it gives an opportunity for public feedback on the budget and meets all notice requirements under O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1 and the Georgia Open Meetings Act.

State charter schools are encouraged to consult with independent legal counsel should they wish to proceed with virtual budget amendment hearings during the state of emergency. Although the SCSC may consider a virtual hearing compliant for accountability purposes, there may be a need to evaluate the possibility of additional risks outside of the SCSC accountability context.

3. Given that the State of Georgia has not passed an FY21 budget, are governing boards still required to adopt an FY21 annual operating budget?

Yes. However, because the State of Georgia does not have an approved FY21 budget, GaDOE is unable to provide FY21 QBE estimates to state charter schools. Thus, state charter schools will likely experience difficulty developing an accurate FY21 budget. If the state charter school is unable to develop and pass its FY21 budget by June 30, 2020, the state charter schools MUST pass a spending resolution each month in FY21 until the state charter school is able to adopt an FY21 budget. Section IV – Chapter 2 of the GaDOE Financial Management Handbook for Georgia’s Local Units of Administration (FMGLUA) includes details on passing monthly spending resolutions as well as sample spending resolutions. You may access the full chapter [here](#). Pages IV-32-54 through IV-32-55 discuss spending resolutions specifically.

The SCSC does not equate the adoption of a spending resolution with an “annual operating budget” as governed by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1. Because the adoption of a spending resolution requires board approval, any vote to adopt a spending resolution must comply with the requirements of the Georgia Open Meetings Act.

4. Once the State of Georgia approves an FY21 State budget, will the SCSC continue to find that governing boards holding virtual budget hearings have met O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1 legal obligations?

Whether the SCSC may consider virtual FY21 annual budget hearings compliant with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1 will depend on whether a governing board has appropriately determined that a state of emergency, pursuant to Georgia Open Meetings Act provisions at O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 (d) and (g), exists. Governing boards should consult with independent legal counsel in making this determination and are further encouraged to contact SCSC legal staff for additional guidance before planning to hold an FY21 annual budget hearing virtually.

5. Are there any recommendations for how state charter schools should plan for FY21 annual budgets?

The SCSC cannot predict when an FY21 budget will be approved or the exact impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the education funding formula. The SCSC has not received any formal communication regarding changes to the FY21 education funding formula. Thus, the SCSC recommends that schools continue plans to prepare a contingency budget for FY21 using the school’s 65% projected enrollment operating budget as a starting point.

Employee Safety

GaDOE released new [guidance](#) related to “In-person Reporting and Staff Safety.”

Georgia Insights

Dr. David Schonfeld, a pediatric behavioral specialist from the National Center on School Crisis and Bereavement, conducted a webinar for parents and guardians regarding the emotional status of children and parents. The webinar is posted [here](#).

State Charter Schools Commission

- The April 29th SCSC meeting was held via teleconference. The meeting minutes summary is available [here](#).
- The deadline for Local Board Governance and the Charter Governance Board Training reports for FY20 (originally due June 30) have been extended to September 30, 2020. The SCSC released a [FAQ](#) with further details.
- The SCSC released a proposed Charter Contract Extension as a result of COVID-19-related school closures. The [proposal](#) is posted on the SCSC website. Charter schools should review the proposal and submit feedback to Katie Manthey at katie.manthey@scsc.georgia.gov by May 8, 2020. SCSC staff plan to share the proposal with commissioners at the April 29, 2020 SCSC Board Meeting and bring the final recommendation to commissioners for a vote at the June 24, 2020 SCSC Board Meeting.
- The May 27, 2020 SCSC Board Meeting is canceled.

State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia

- The State Charter Schools Foundation (SCSF) is accepting grant applications for COVID-19 relief. Funds may be used for technology, internet access and at-risk tutoring services. The majority of funds currently available are restricted to metro-Atlanta schools (based on the funder), but the SCSF is actively working to support schools on a statewide basis. To submit an application, state charter schools should complete [the form](#). Additional information and guidelines about the application are included in the [grant application packet](#). For questions, email grants@scsfqa.org.

Other Resources for State Charter Schools

Online Learning

- Georgia Cyber Academy is compiling [Resources for Online Educators](#). The website is still a work in progress, but Georgia Cyber Academy will update the website as more content comes available.
- The SCSC and State Charter Schools Foundation facilitated virtual learning webinars with Georgia Connections Academy (April 2) and Georgia Cyber Academy (April 3). The webinars and presentations are both posted on the [SCSC website](#).

Supporting Staff & Employees

- Click [here](#) for information from Georgia Department of Labor, Mandatory Filing by Employers for Partial Claims.
- Click [here](#) for information from Georgia Department of Labor, Partial Claims (Emergency rule).
- The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) publicly posted a prerecorded online webinar addressing questions arising under any of the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Laws and the COVID-19 pandemic to its website www.eeoc.gov on March 27.
 - The webinar is devoted to answering questions submitted in advance about how to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in light of the federal employment nondiscrimination laws. The webinar addresses the ADA, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), Title VII, and GINA, as these are the laws the EEOC enforces.
 - The webinar supplements the COVID-19 publications already issued by the EEOC, including the "[What You Should Know About the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and COVID-19](#)" and "[Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)".
- US Dept of Labor has provided additional [guidance](#) for implementation of emergency paid leave, sick leave and family leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) which takes effect on April 1, 2020.
- The GCN Nonprofit Consulting Group is offering complimentary Rapid Response Consulting sessions for nonprofits working to recover and respond. The Rapid

Response Consulting sessions are being offered free of charge for any Georgia nonprofit through Wednesday, April 22nd. For more information on scheduling a virtual one-on-one session, email consulting@qcn.org.

Vendor Agreements

Many state charter schools may have vendor contracts that will be impacted by COVID-19.

- As a preliminary matter, state charter schools should conduct an analysis of vendor contracts to identify which partnerships may be affected.
- Once impacted contracts are identified, state charter schools should review each contract to gauge the potential impact of deferring or terminating the contract.
 - Many contracts will contain “Force Majeure” or “Acts of God” clauses
 - O.C.G.A. § 13-4-21. Effect of an Act of God. “If performance of the terms of a contract becomes impossible as a result of an act of God, such impossibility shall excuse nonperformance, except where, by proper prudence, such impossibility might have been avoided by the promisor.”
- Schools should work closely with their attorney to address contracts which may present a termination or deferral risk.

Governing Board Meetings

- The Open Meetings Act provides flexibility in “emergency circumstances,” which must be determined by the school. The Open Meetings Act permits governing bodies to conduct meetings by teleconference in emergency circumstances (i.e. circumstances necessitated by emergency conditions involving public safety or the preservation of property or public services, agencies or committees) “so long as the [required notice] is provided and means are afforded for the public to have simultaneous access to the teleconference meeting.”

If the school determines that emergency circumstances exist, then the board is permitted to meet by teleconference. Although the standard notice requirements apply, governing boards may wish to follow some combination of notice procedures for regular, called, and emergency meetings to ensure that the public is aware of the change from in-person to virtual and that the meeting

is still occurring. Additionally, governing boards should ensure that capacity limits for virtual meeting platforms are not prohibitive.

Further, a recording of the meeting is insufficient to allow “simultaneous access.” A School may, however, wish to make a recording available in addition to the simultaneous access required by statute. For additional information, see O.C.G.A. sec. 50-14-1 (d) and O.C.G.A. sec. 50-14-1 (g).

Additional Resources

- The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is hosting, Virtual Fundraising in Times of Crisis, a webinar with Charles Best, founder and CEO of DonorsChoose, on Wednesday, May 20, at 1 p.m. ET. Register [here](#).
- **Online Summer Classes/Course Offered.** The Georgia Virtual School [offers courses](#) – AP, CTAE, world language, core courses, etc. -- for middle and high schoolers. For more information, contact: Margaret Thomas at margaret.thomas@gavirtualschool.org
- The Georgia Department of Education, in collaboration with the Governor’s Office, has launched a [Deploying Devices, Ensuring Connectivity, and Expanding Access](#) guide for districts to assist with the purchasing and development of devices.
- The Mississippi Department of Education has released a comprehensive guide/template for districts to walk them through the development of a district digital learning plan. Click [here](#) for the guide.
- Opportunity Labs launched an online tool, [Return to School Roadmap](#), to assist districts in their planning for the upcoming school year.
- The XQ Institute released a [Virtual High School Graduation Toolkit](#). The free guide is available to anyone to celebrate high school seniors in their community.
- The Council of Chief State School Officers released two resourced to support districts’ efforts in the planning and delivery of virtual summer learning opportunities: [Guidance for Districts and School Leaders](#) and [an aligned template planning guide](#).