

Staff FAQ regarding COVID-19 closures (March 16, 2020)

What will staff members be paid for school closure days?

Salaried and hourly school-based employees (not including temporary employees or substitute teachers) and district office PSASA/BTU employees and/or 10 month employees:

On March 16-19, when schools are closed, these employees will be paid for their standard hours (the same as if school were in session).

Pending Board approval, March 20 and March 23-27 are expected to be designated as spring break days. These employees will be paid for their standard hours as holiday pay (the same as if school were in session). This replaces the original spring break days (April 6-10 and April 13).

District office staff not affiliated with PSASA/BTU:

Pending Board approval, March 23-25 are expected to be designated as spring break days. These employees will be paid for their standard hours on those dates as holiday pay (the same as if school were in session). This replaces the original spring break days (April 9-10 and April 13).

District office staff affiliated with PSRP can use floating holidays on the new school-based spring break dates when district office remains open (March 20 and March 26-27).

Are temporary employees paid for school closure days?

Temporary employees are paid their applicable hourly rate only for hours worked and will continue to be paid for any hours they work.

Can school-based temporary employees work while schools are closed?

Yes, school-based supervisors may ask temporary employees to report while schools are closed. If a school-based temporary employee has questions or concerns about reporting and/or would like to work, they should speak with their school-based supervisor.

Are substitute teachers paid for school closure days?

No. Substitute teachers are paid their applicable daily rate only on days when school is open and they work. At this time, we expect that the four school closure days that will not be a part of spring break (March 16-19) will need to be made up later in the school year. Dates in June were previously identified as inclement weather make-up days. This means that substitute teachers will have the same number of potential work days this year as they do in a typical school year.

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Why is the district office open?

The district office remains open to do the work needed to respond to COVID-19 and to prepare school buildings for reopening, continue communications, and support students, families, and staff. Much of the work performed in district offices can continue even when students are not attending school. That said, staff at the district office are not available for normal, day-to-day operations.

What options do district office staff members have on days when schools are closed but district office remains open?

Effective Monday, March 16, until further notice, all non-essential district office staff members are strongly encouraged to work from home, particularly if they are in a high-risk population. While they do not need a pre-established plan to work from home, they need to align expectations for work during the work from home period with their immediate supervisor. Also effective Monday, March 16, until further notice, liberal leave is in effect for non-essential employees, meaning that those non-essential district office staff members may use any accrued leave time without prior approval. Employees who are part of a high-risk population according to the CDC are advised to work from home or take liberal leave.

Do school closure days affect the return date for a staff member on approved, long-term leave?

No. The return date from a long-term leave is determined based on the need outlined in the application for long-term leave. The approved leave dates are not changed by school closure. If a staff member who is on long-term leave believes they need to extend their return date due to the nature of the leave, the staff member must submit an application to the Human Capital Office to extend the leave.

Do school closure days count against either my accrued leave time or the 60-day FMLA maximum?

The only days that count against a staff member's accrued leave time or the 60-day FMLA maximum are days when the staff member would otherwise be expected to work. For each day which a staff member's time is coded as "school closure leave" or "holiday pay," depending on their employee category, the staff member does not need to use leave time and the day will not count against the 60-day FMLA maximum.

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Will I be charged leave time for previously approved leave that occurs during the school closure period?

For school-based non-essential employees: No. Regardless of whether you had approved time off overlapping with the closure window, no personal accruals will be used for this time. *For school-based essential employees and for district office employees:* On any day that is not considered spring break for your employee group, formal requests for time off will result in utilizing your personal accruals, when applicable.

Who are considered essential employees?

Board Policy EBCD includes a list of permanent essential employees, which includes the following titles: Principals, Lead Technicians (formerly Education Building Supervisors), Building Engineers, Contract Maintenance Staff, Custodial Staff, Grounds and Repair Shop Personnel, Transportation Administrative Staff, School Police, and Chief Officers. Due to the unique nature of this closure, additional employees have been identified as essential personnel under the authority of Board Policy EBCD. Communications were sent on and around March 13th to any staff members identified as additional essential personnel. We will continue to monitor the needs of the district and modify the list of essential personnel when necessary to meet needs.

May I be take leave on the April dates that originally coincided with spring break for my employee group?

We understand that changes in the school calendar are unexpected and may be stressful. In order to ensure our students are served, all staff members are expected to report to work on scheduled work days. This now includes, pending Board approval, dates that were originally scheduled as spring break. Staff who do not accrue vacation days (e.g., teachers; paraeducators; and others) are expected to work on all April dates when schools are open. Staff who accrue vacation days may submit a leave request for April dates that were originally scheduled as spring break. Supervisors will use the same discretion for approval of these leave requests as they do any other leave request.

Will my previously approved leave request, including dates that are adjacent to the original spring break dates, be honored?

Yes, previously approved time off will be honored. However, if you would like to request a change due to the shift in spring break dates, which are pending Board approval, please submit a request to your supervisor. Supervisors will use the same discretion for approval of these requests as they do any other leave request.

How can we ensure we have enough substitute teachers available to cover absences?

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We hire new substitute teachers every month to add to our substitute teacher pool, including more than 130 last month. Additionally, the Human Capital Office is conducting outreach to substitute teachers to identify a special group of substitutes to deploy in the case of unanticipated or last-minute absences. At schools, the first action to take once a school learns of a staff absence is to enter the absence into AESOP so that the substitute system can immediately begin electronically seeking a match from the substitute teacher pool. If a school leader has questions regarding the use of AESOP, they should connect with their Human Capital partner. Once schools reopen, should a school experience a higher than usual number of absences, they should connect with their Human Capital partner as soon as possible for a coverage plan.

The CDC recommends social distancing. How is social distancing defined?

Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.