

Dear MIEA Members,

Things are certainly changing rapidly in our state, our nation, and in our schools.

Your health and well-being, and that of your families, students and our community remains MIEA's top priority. Gov. Jay Inslee closed our schools and is asking us all to stay at home in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the impacts of this pandemic to people, our health care system and economy. We are all feeling the impact of these changes, and MIEA is here to support you. Reach out if you need us.

Please know that MIEA and WEA are fighting for three main things:

1. Your health, that of your families, students and community;
2. Your ability to remain economically whole as a contributing member of our local and state economy;
3. Flexibility -- in work assignments, work locations, and adjusting to new conditions. School may be closed, but there is still work to be done. It might look different. What you do and where you do it may change. As your local, MIEA is insisting that for anyone who is required to work onsite, the district follow all the recommended safeguards and protections for individuals. Districts cannot unilaterally require that employees work onsite without working with the local union to ensure that recommended safeguards and protections are in place.

MISD has assured us that they will continue to collaborate with MIEA as to what our work will look like moving forward, and I have been working with HR to make sure the expectations are safe and manageable. Please continue to check your email for further updates this week and next, OSPI has made some big changes to the guidelines they have been sending out, and there are more to come next week.

For your information here are some links to resources that I have been using to inform our MOU as I adjust it to the changes in our state guidelines for OSPI.

- [OSPI guidance](#) (all topics)
- [DOH guidance for child care](#)
- [US ED -- Special education](#)
- [Kansas continuous learning document](#)
- [WEA legal guidance for family/student contact](#)

Member Questions and Answers:

Q. Custodial staff - can they use sick leave if they feel they need to stay home for the safety and health of themselves and their families?

A. Yes, we can all use our sick leave as needed.

Q. Classified staff - any idea how the classified staff hours were split up for childcare/food distribution? Some have 2 hours; others have 3.

A. I have asked that question and am waiting for a response, but my assumption would be that staff who normally have more FTE, were given more FTE...I will ask HR later today though.

Q. When will minimum standards for distance learning be issued by OSPI and what will be required for reporting?

A. I am told to anticipate that new guidance will be released the week of March 30.

Q. How is this new guidance for continuous learning equitable?

A: We have to remember that even though we have been working hard to improve equitable access to public education for all students, we weren't there before the pandemic hit. We must continue to make good faith efforts to reach every student, including those with disabilities, students of color and English Language Learners, while we navigate through these school closures. We must also keep in mind that it is not up to individual educators to solve this -- districts should be working with our education associations to provide systemic solutions to meet the needs of all students in the best way we can given these unprecedented circumstances

Q. What if a student doesn't do the work? Are we expected to grade them?

A. OSPI has said that continuous learning should be based on common sense, compassion and family communication, not compliance.

Q. Can you address what types of instructional support special education teachers are being required to design and deliver?

A. The short answer is that you make a good faith effort to provide meaningful instruction. Below is US ED guidance. (see link above)

- US ED clarified its position regarding services and particularly the use of online resources, noting that schools " . . . should not opt to close or decline to provide distance instruction, at the expense of students, to address matters pertaining to services for students with disabilities. Rather, school systems must make local decisions that take into consideration the health, safety, and well-being of all their students and staff."
- US ED also notes that the Free and Accessible Public Education (FAPE) requires each district to meet "its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances" and that these "exceptional circumstances may affect how all educational and related services and supports are provided, and the (US Education) Department will offer flexibility where possible."
- US ED encourages parents, educators, and administrators to collaborate creatively to continue to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Consider practices such as distance instruction, teletherapy and tele-intervention, meetings held on digital platforms, online options for data tracking, and documentation. In addition, there are low-tech strategies that can provide for an exchange of curriculum-based resources, instructional packets, projects, and written assignments.

Q. Any word on state backfilling funding for districts now trying to get devices and wifi to our students? Districts are going to spend a ton of unanticipated funds on tech as we head into a potential economic slowdown. Compounds our equity issues. Many families have more kids than tech devices.

A. No talk currently for this. It may be possible that federal funds could be used. Keep in mind that while districts are spending money, they are also saving money on functions and facilities not in use.

Q. What are the issues about contacting families and students? Can I use my personal phone? Personal email? Are online meetings OK?

A. MISD has indicated that they do not want us to use our personal phones/email for communication with students. WEA Legal has put out guidance on this topic but generally speaking, you should not use any communication platform that doesn't keep a record of your communication. Content would probably need to be retained for public records purposes but would likely be exempt from disclosure as educational records.

Q. What about child care issues?

A. The Governor has said that providing child care for first responders and health care workers is a societal priority as we address the coronavirus. In most cases, if your district is not already providing child care, it may not need to do so now. If it does provide this service, the Governor has said schools can work with community organizations to do so. They may call for volunteers first. Under any circumstance, DOH child care guidelines ([link above](#)) must be followed. Those who are older, pregnant, have immune or other health issues can not be required to work on-site.

Q. Is it true that we will have to extend the school year to or beyond June 19?

A. Your district must apply for a waiver. OSPI has said that if a good faith effort has been made to make up lost hours or days, it will grant the waivers. Schools that typically end before June 19 would have until June 19 to make up the time. Schools that end after June 19 would have until their previously scheduled end date to meet the requirements.

I am doing my best to collaborate with MISD and make sure the work we do follows the guidelines set forth by our governor, OSPI, the CDC, King County Health Dept, and all the other governing bodies that are weighing into our professions, you can help by staying informed and asking questions when you have them. Visit washingtonea.org and follow WEA on Facebook for updates from WEA.

I hope this email helps answer some questions you may have. Please reach out if there are questions you need answers to about your working conditions or our changing guidelines. Your building reps or I will do our best to find answers, and get back to you as soon as possible.

Stay well and informed!

Sincerely,
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