

Hot Resources: COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic

Background

The recent outbreak and spread of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has prompted a great deal of media attention and questions and concerns on the impact it will have on schools.

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.](#)

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Severe complications have included pneumonia in both lungs. There is currently no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19 nor is there a vaccine to prevent it.

The NEA communications team is providing the following approved messaging and resources below for public use and will continue to update the entire State Communications network with new materials that are being created regularly to address this crisis.

Key Messaging & Resources

NEA COVID-19 Coronavirus Website: www.nea.org/coronavirus

NEA Press Release calling on all schools to close: <http://www.nea.org/home/75971.htm>

NEA Edvotes Page dedicated to COVID-19: <https://educationvotes.nea.org/issue/covid-19/>

General

- The nation's students, educators, and all their families are at the forefront of thinking as we grapple with the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Safety is our top priority. NEA continues to advocate fiercely for students' and educators' safety, health, and rights. With our priority in mind and reviewing the latest CDC guidance regarding COVID-19 and school closures, NEA is now calling on all schools to immediately close for at least two weeks.
- NEA leadership and staff across the country are coordinating to provide guidance on safety and health for students and educators, based on facts and the most current information available regarding the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.
- From students who desperately need the safety and food that schools provide, to custodians and bus drivers who are facing lost paychecks and unsafe work conditions, our nation must provide support and confront the prevailing systemic issues in our public schools that have been amplified by this crisis. NEA is hard at work with our network across the country to take on these inequities with the full weight of our union.
- A majority of America's students are now learning from their homes as schools have closed in hopes of curbing the spread of the novel coronavirus. As educators and parents come to grips with this new reality, we must recognize that everyone does not have the same opportunity to take care of their family during these turbulent times, and many are disproportionately affected by schools and businesses closing.
- **Emergency legislation to help educators, students, and parents adversely affected by the crisis is now eligible for a vote in the U.S. Senate. It was passed overwhelmingly by the House last week and is supported by the President. You can help America's students,**

educators and working families - [Email your senators right now and urge them to pass the Families First Coronavirus Response Act without delay.](#)

School Closures

- NEA's primary concern remains the health, safety, and welfare of students, families, and educators, as well as the health and safety of the broader community. After reviewing the latest CDC guidance regarding COVID-19 and school closures, NEA is calling on all schools to immediately close for at least two weeks.
- The CDC has recommended banning all gatherings of more than 50 people, but exempted schools. We are calling on the CDC to update their guidance and include schools for the safety of all people.
- We commend the state and district leaders who have already prioritized the safety of our students. Like them, we do not take this decision lightly. Closing schools is not only needed, but also necessary to protect our students, our educators, and our communities.
- It is precisely because of this focus on community health that NEA is working with every state affiliate to ensure that employees are able to stay home without fear of losing income; that states and districts take all necessary steps to ensure students who rely on school meals still are able to access them, including keeping relevant school sites open; that each and every student has access to appropriate learning resources; and that all members of the community are fully supported in caring for their health and the health of those around them.
- **Resources**
 - NEA Press Release calling on schools to close: <http://www.nea.org/home/75971.htm>
 - [Lily Twitter Thread](#)
 - Track school closures: [Ed Week School Closure Tracker](#)
 - NEA Today: [What to Think About When Your School is Closing Due to Coronavirus](#)

Student- Educator Health & Wellness

- Health experts are projecting the COVID-19 coronavirus to spread up to 1/3 of the American population, if we don't take proper precautions. This number shouldn't cause panic, it should spur action. That's why NEA is advocating for restrictions and legislation that makes the safety of our students and educators a top priority. Email your senators right now and urge them to pass the Families First Coronavirus Response Act without delay.
- NEA supports policies that limit contact with potentially infected individuals and those at higher risk of serious illness. All members of the community should be fully supported in caring for their health and the health of those around them.
- For those with open districts, the sheer number of people interacting in school communities daily, means we must all work together and be vigilant in helping to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. NEA is encouraging every educator to play a role in helping students and peers understand the importance of consistently and thoroughly washing hands, avoiding touching the face, and staying home when sick.
- **Resources**
 - [NEA COVID-19 web page](#)
 - NEA Today Article: [What Should Schools Do To Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Illnesses?](#)
 - NEA Today Article: [Keeping a Germ-Free Classroom](#)
 - [Johns Hopkins Resource Center](#)
 - We encourage all NEA members and allies to use the [CDC's School Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist](#) and advocate for safety measures in your school communities.

Digital Learning - Broadband Equity

- We all have an obligation to ensure that our most vulnerable members and students do not get left behind as public schools are closed and shifting rapidly to Digital learning methods. Crisis or not, we as a nation must address the issues of equity and access that surround remote learning in a comprehensive manner
- NEA believes that educational programs and strategies designed to close the achievement and digital gaps must address equity issues related to broadband Internet access, software and technical support, and hardware maintenance.
- Under our current inequitable system of funding, our country's shift to a large-scale use of technology in preK–12 and postsecondary education during this crisis will likely widen achievement gaps among students.
- In these changing roles, it is important to protect the rights of educators, and to fairly evaluate the accomplishments of educational institutions as a whole. For example, the use of supplemental, remedial, or course recovery online instruction can affect the hours, wages, and working conditions of all educational employees, but can dramatically affect college and university faculty and staff.
- **Resources**
 - NEA Today - [Resources for Online Learning During School Closures](#)
 - International Society for Technology in Education - [10 strategies for online learning during a coronavirus outbreak](#)
 - Washington Post - [‘It shouldn’t take a pandemic’: Coronavirus exposes Internet inequality among U.S. students as schools close their doors](#)

Workers’ Rights - Compensation

- The coronavirus pandemic has exposed something educators already know: our current federal protections for working people are severely lacking. NEA believes that policies like mandatory paid sick leave are necessary, not only as a basic right, but as a necessary preventative measure to the spread of this pandemic.
- NEA recognizes that the primary concern is the health safety and welfare of students, families and educators, as well as the health and safety of the broader community. Concerns to community health are precisely why it is imperative that employees are able to stay home from work when sick.
- We're aware that COVID-19 will have significant impact on the continuation of pay and benefits for many NEA members. The NEA is working with its affiliates across the nation to ensure that educators are treated fairly, and student learning is a priority.
- **Resources**
 - NEA is supporting the Families First Coronavirus Response Package because it provides 14 days paid sick leave and 3 months paid family medical leave, as well as Enhanced unemployment insurance. [Email your senators right now and urge them to pass the Families First Coronavirus Response Act without delay.](#)

Nutrition – Food Access

- With school closures related to COVID-19, NEA is committed to finding ways to ensure that the approximately 20 million children who rely on school meals will not go hungry.
- NEA is supporting the Families First Coronavirus Response Package that will Strengthen food security initiatives, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), student meals, seniors’ nutrition, and food banks. [Email your senators right now and urge them to pass the Families First Coronavirus Response Act without delay.](#)
- NEA is strongly advocating for the passage of legislation of a nationwide waiver authority to allow schools to distribute food in a variety of settings across all nutrition programs.

- **Resources**

- [NEA - Education Votes: Child Nutrition](#)
- [USDA: Guidance on Human Pandemic Response](#)
- [Secretary Perdue: “If Schools are Closed, We are Going to do our Very Best to Make Sure Kids are Fed”](#)
- [Secretary Perdue Announces Proactive Flexibilities to Feed Children When Schools Close](#)