



## **ASCD COVID-19 Immediate Policy Considerations March 2020**

Districts, schools, educators, and students are confronted with an unprecedented public health emergency. To date, 38 states have closed more than 74,000 schools, affecting nearly 40 million students.

Foremost among the concerns of local school leaders and educators in responding to this crisis is protecting their students' health, meeting their food needs, and providing learning services to the maximum extent possible.

Congress and the U.S. Department of Education should take numerous actions to help schools and educators as they serve students and their communities. Most education laws, rules, and programs were never designed to function under statewide and extended school closures. In response, ASCD recommends the following actions to address the short- and intermediate-term effects of COVID-19 on schools and communities:

1. Temporarily waive school meal requirements.
  - a. Allow pick up or delivery of school meals at social-distancing friendly or remote community sites to remove barriers to access for all students, with a special focus on serving underrepresented populations.
  - b. Provide flexibility with reimbursement processes to incentivize creativity, innovation, and resourcefulness at the state and local levels to meet student food and nutrition needs.
  - c. Provide flexibility with USDA nutritional guidelines or sourcing of food to address supply chain interruption issues.
  
2. Temporarily waive ESSA assessment and accountability requirements.
  - a. Provide flexibility with the administration of annual statewide assessments.
  - b. Provide flexibility with accountability determinations and consequences (e.g., subgroup accountability, 95% eligible population testing requirement, required ranking and classification of schools, including Comprehensive Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, and Additional Targeted Support designations)
  - c. Provide flexibility with minimum attendance thresholds and reporting (average daily attendance and chronic absenteeism calculations and accountability as included in statewide accountability systems).
  - d. Allow schools that can deliver online learning to consider this work an instructional day.
  
3. Temporarily waive specific federal K–12 grant requirements.
  - a. Provide flexibility with allowable uses of funds given unique and dynamically changing environmental factors including the need for virtual services and support (e.g., prolonged school closure, interruption of planning and budgetary and monitoring cycles due to social distancing).
  - b. Provide flexibility with deadlines for use of funds, including carryover of grants past the end of the school year or fiscal year.

4. Provide stimulus funding to address learning loss and emergency circumstances.
  - a. Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B state grants for:
    - i. Provision of services to ensure children with disabilities' needs continue to be met during these challenging times.
    - ii. Increased technical assistance to schools, districts, and states to ensure that educators, decision makers, and families have the information, resources, and supports they need to effectively work together to meet student needs while also upholding the core principles of IDEA.
  - b. Triple Title I funding to local school districts to \$50 billion.
  - c. Increase Title II supporting effective instruction state grants to \$3.1 billion to spur professional development for educators to better deliver distance and virtual learning.
  - d. Increase Title IV student support and academic enrichment grants by \$1 billion to \$2.1 billion for technology access for online learning and student mental health assistance.

The temporary relief offered by these waivers will help unburden school leaders and educators as they try their best to meet all students' needs until the crisis has passed and a return to existing rules and normal operations occurs.

The emergency funding is a critical economic stimulus that will immediately deliver money into economically distressed local communities across the country. In addition, and more important, the funding is necessary to support students, particularly those who are most in need, who have been most affected by these extended school closures, and who need additional services and resources during this national emergency that has so disrupted their education and their lives.