

BOARD BRIEF

Date: May 29, 2020

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION:

FROM: Jennifer Abbruzzese, Director of Policy and Board Initiatives

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: School Board Policies Impacted by the COVID-19 School Closure

ACPS 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 1: Academic Excellence and Educational Equity
Goal 2: Family and Community Engagement
Goal 3: An Exemplary Staff
Goal 4: Facilities and the Learning Environment
Goal 5: Health and Wellness
Goal 6: Effective and Efficient Operations

SY 2019-2020 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Educational Equity

FY 2020 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Specialized Instruction
English Learner Services
Gap Group Achievements
Academics
Communications and Customer Service for External Stakeholders
Safe Schools for Students and Faculty
Optimal and Equitable Learning Environments
Mental and Social/Emotional Health
Physical Education/Fitness
Nutrition Programs

SUMMARY:

Many School Board policies reflect state and federal laws and regulations, some of which have been waived by the relevant government authority during the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closure. Such waivers of existing laws and regulations are designed to be limited in duration. Therefore, on April 24, 2020, the School Board adopted a [Resolution Regarding Suspension of School Board Policies](#). The resolution addressed the impracticality of changing all affected Board policies quickly enough through regular order to implement the temporary legal and regulatory changes.

BOARD BRIEF

Since the resolution's adoption, impacted School Board policies and regulations may be waived while the laws or regulations on which they are based have been waived or amended. In addition, the resolution directs the Superintendent "to inform the School Board and the public of any policies or regulations that are proposed for suspension and the duration of such suspensions."

The following Board policies and regulations have been impacted by the COVID-19 school closure as outlined below:

Regulation BBBB-R and BBBB-R2: Student Representatives to the School Board

These regulations outline selection processes and application timelines that are now inaccurate. Instead of high school Student Representative applications being due in April, they may now be submitted through June 1 on the [School Board Student Representative web page](#). Instead of the applications being reviewed and advanced by the Student Representative Selection Committee (comprised of T.C. Williams (TCW) students) in May, a committee of staff members (who regularly advise SRSC members) and the TCW principal will review and forward applications through the Superintendent to the School Board in June.

Because the new Middle School Student Representative program effectively launched in January 2020 and was suspended by the closure in March, the Student Representatives from Patrick Henry K-8 School and Jefferson-Houston PreK-8 School will continue to serve for SY 2020-2021. As the current student representatives for Francis C. Hammond and George Washington middle schools are advancing to 9th grade in fall 2020, new representatives will be selected by their respective principals. Online applications are being accepted through June 15 on the [School Board Student Representative web page](#).

Policy BCF and Regulation BCF-R: Advisory Committees to the School Board

Although Policy BCF currently requires the Board Chair to "organize a meeting of the Committee Chairs and Board liaisons at least twice during the school year," only one such meeting occurred prior to the March school closure.

In addition, this policy's in-person committee meeting requirements have been relaxed in accordance with the amendment of [Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2\(A\)\(3\)](#) and [Acts of Assembly Chap. 1283 § 4-0.01\(g\)](#), as discussed below for Policy BDD.

Although Regulation BCF-R requires Board advisory committees to meet quarterly during the school year, committees are currently assessing their ability to meet virtually.

Policy BDD: Electronic Participation in Meetings from Remote Locations

This policy's in-person meeting requirements have been relaxed in accordance with the amendment of [Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2\(A\)\(3\)](#) and [Acts of Assembly Chap. 1283 § 4-0.01\(g\)](#).

During the ACPS school closure, the School Board will hold virtual Special Called Board Meetings each Friday at 12:00 p.m.

Such virtual meetings held during the State of Emergency are limited to:

- Addressing the public health emergency declared by Governor Northam on

BOARD BRIEF

March 12, 2020 (Va. Code § 44-146.17); and

- Business that is necessary to continue school division operations and to discharge the School Board's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities.

Notice of virtual Special Called Board Meetings will be posted on the ACPS Calendar. Efforts will be made to broadcast virtual meetings live, and the agendas, minutes and video recordings for these meetings will be posted on the [School Board Meetings web page](#).

Regulation BDDH-R/KD-R: Regulations for Public Communications with the School Board

This regulation outlines the process for providing written and in-person public comments during School Board Meetings. During the COVID-19 school closure and resulting virtual Special Called Board Meetings, the Board is receiving written public comments and posting them online with each meeting agenda. Participation at public hearings will take place virtually through live webinars. Members of the public may submit written comments and/or sign up to speak at the 2025 Strategic Plan virtual public hearings (June 9, 2020) on the [School Board Meetings web page](#).

Policy EBCA: Emergency Preparedness Drills

Although Policy EBCA outlines the mandatory drills to be completed each school year, the statutory provisions ([Code of Virginia, §22.1-137 et seq.](#)) supporting this policy refer to drills that must be performed “during the school session.” As schools have not been in session since March 13, drills have ceased since that time.

Regulation EBCD-R: Emergency School Closures, Delayed Opening and Early Dismissal

This regulation was amended by the Superintendent via [Board Brief on March 13, 2020](#) to address school closures and employee work schedules during public health emergencies. Although this regulation has not been suspended, its recent revisions addressing telework and outlining which employees are “essential personnel” were specifically drafted to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Policy EFB: Free and Reduced Price Food Services

Policy EFB states that ACPS provides “free and reduced price breakfasts and lunches to students according to the terms of the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, and any other special meal/snack programs identified to meet the needs of our students. School officials will determine student eligibility based on guidelines established by federal law.”

During the COVID-19 school closure, ACPS is participating in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This program is engaged at the federal level when schools are not in session to provide meals to children in need between the ages 2-18. Under the SFSP, because 50% of the ACPS student population qualifies for Free and Reduced Meals (FARM), ACPS is able to offer meals to all students ages 2-18, regardless of their eligibility.

Regulation GAAB-R: Telework Regulations

Regulation GAAB-R outlines limited circumstances under which ACPS employees may telework and requires submission and pre-approval of a Telework Request Form. Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and resulting closure, the more expansive

BOARD BRIEF

telework provisions found in [Regulation EBCD-R, section VII. A. \(3\)](#) (discussed above) have been implemented.

Policy IC/ID: School Year/School Day

Policy IC/ID requires ACPS to operate its schools “with students in attendance a minimum of 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours (540 hours for kindergarten) per school year” ([Va. Code § 22.1-98](#)). In addition, it mandates the length of the regular school day, the provision of recess, and that “the secondary school class schedule shall contain a minimum of 140 clock hours for each unit of credit.” (Waiver of the 140-clock hour requirement is discussed below for Policy IKF.)

Because Governor Northam halted all in-person instruction in Virginia schools on March 13, 2020, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (on behalf of the Virginia Board of Education) ([8VAC20-521-40 \(E\)](#), approved ACPS’ *length of school term waiver* for SY 2019-2020 ([Va. Code § 22.1-98](#)) on May 11, 2020.

Policy IEA: Pledge of Allegiance

Although Policy IEA states that the Pledge of Allegiance “shall be recited daily prior to or following the Moment of Silence in each classroom of the Alexandria City Public Schools,” this is not occurring in every virtual “classroom” due to the differentiated aspects, varied schedules and multiple platforms associated with distance learning.

Policy IGAE/IGAF: Health/Physical Education

Policy IGAE/IGAF sets minimum weekly time standards for health/physical education (PE) instruction:

- “Elementary school students will receive 60-90 minutes per week of physical education instruction, in addition to daily recess and active classroom learning.
- Middle school students will receive a minimum of 210 minutes per week of health/physical education instruction.
- Students enrolled in high school health/physical education classes will receive an average of 180 minutes of instruction per week.”

In accordance with the *length of term school waiver* discussed above for Policy IC/ID and recognizing the differentiated aspects, varied schedules and multiple platforms associated with distance learning, Health/PE teachers are creatively reaching students (grades K-10) to provide opportunities and instruction related to movement in lieu of the in-person instruction listed above.

At the elementary level, while school approaches vary, Health/PE teachers have found success in engaging students through video creation, synchronous online learning and created movement calendars.

At the secondary level, while school schedules vary, online lessons are created for students with teachers available for consultation and direction. In addition, some schools have also incorporated teacher-led brain boosts.

Family Life Education (FLE), provided through Health/PE instruction, is currently fluid throughout the school division as teachers navigate the numerous considerations involved in remote FLE instruction. Efforts will be made during SY 2020-2021 to review

BOARD BRIEF

material from this year. ([Policy IGAH: Family Life Education](#))

Note: Health/PE 10 includes Driver's Education. As of 4/28/20, all current 10th graders have received their Driver's Education training.

Policy IKC and Regulation IKC-R: Grading

On April 17, 2020, the School Board approved changes to Policy IKC and Regulation IKC-R for the third and fourth quarters of SY 2019-2020. The changes included provisions such as:

- Designating fourth quarter standards as "Introduced but Not Assessed" (INA) or "Not Taught" (NT) at the elementary level; and
- Giving secondary students the opportunity to earn either a "Pass" (P) or "No Grade" (NG) for their fourth quarter work. Letter grades will not be assigned for the fourth quarter.

These temporary provisions aligned Board policy with the [grading guidelines set forth by the Virginia Department of Education \(VDOE\)](#) on March 23, 2020. They are intended to help mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 school closure on students' academic instruction, assessment and record-keeping and are outlined in the [April 17, 2020 Board Memo](#).

Policy IKF and Regulation IKF-R: The Virginia Assessment Program and Graduation Requirements

In accordance with the Virginia Board of Education's (VBOE) *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* ([8 VAC 20-131 et seq.](#)), this policy and regulation outline:

- Graduation requirements aligned to Standards of Learning (SOL) objectives and VBOE requirements;
- Requirements for earning standard and verified units of credit;
- Requirements and exemptions for end-of-course SOL assessments; and
- Various diplomas that may be earned.

In response to the COVID-19 school closure, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) have developed emergency guidance for students scheduled to graduate with the 2019-2020 cohort:

- [Guidance on Graduation Requirements, Awarding of Credits, and Continuity of Learning](#)
- [Emergency Guidelines for Local Alternatives for Awarding Standard Units of Credit](#)
- [VDOE COVID-19 FAQ](#)

The Superintendent of Public Instruction has thereby authorized several [waivers](#) for students scheduled to graduate with the 2019-2020 cohort (as empowered by [Executive Order 51 \(2020\)](#)). The waivers relate to:

- End-of-course SOL assessments for 2019-2020;
- Online (virtual) course requirements;
- Standard credit requirements;
- Verified credit requirements;

BOARD BRIEF

- CTE industry credential requirements; and
- First Aid/CPR/AED requirements.

Such state-level waivers amend the relevant graduation requirements currently outlined in Policy IKF and Regulation IKF-R for students scheduled to graduate with the 2019-2020 cohort. Relevant ACPS staff members are actively engaging seniors to determine the emergency guidelines' potential applicability for individual students.

Policy IKFA and Regulation IKFA-R: Locally-Awarded Verified Credits

Revisions to the locally-awarded verified credit (LAVC) policy and regulations were presented to the School Board on [May 15, 2020](#). The proposed adjustments to the Board's current LAVC determination process and eligibility requirements:

- Address the Superintendent of Public Instruction's [waiver of SOL testing requirements for spring 2020](#);
- Are of limited duration;
- Are aligned with the Virginia Board of Education's (VBOE) recent LAVC [Emergency Guidelines](#) (April 2, 2020). The guidelines provide direction for awarding verified credits to all students in a course with passing grades as a group, instead of making individual determinations on a case-by-case basis;
- Apply to students who are **scheduled to graduate in 2021 or after** and are enrolled in high school credit-bearing courses with end-of-course Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments during spring 2020; and
- Will apply to courses during the summer 2020 term if a declared State of Emergency overlaps scheduled instruction for the summer 2020 term.

The proposed revisions are intended to ensure equity, flexibility and benefit for ACPS students, while ensuring students have demonstrated mastery of the standards, competencies, and objectives of the relevant course. **The LAVC policy revisions will return to the Board for action on June 5, 2020.**

Regulation JEA-R: Attendance Regulations

Regulation JEA-R, which implements [Policy JEA: Compulsory Attendance](#), mandates that "attendance Codes shall be entered for each student in every period, every school day." As of March 13, 2020, however, VDOE directed the cessation of such coding while schools are closed. ACPS is not currently required to record attendance or report it to VDOE ([Data Collection and Technology FAQs](#)). Although VDOE has encouraged school divisions to maintain attendance records for any student known to be absent due to COVID-19 *prior* to March 16, **students are not considered absent after March 16.**

BACKGROUND:

On Friday, March 13, 2020, ACPS closed all schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to promote physical distancing and the safety and wellness of school staff, students, and their families. The same day, Governor Northam ordered all Virginia schools closed for a period of two weeks. On March 23, 2020 the Governor ordered all Virginia schools to remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year ([Executive Order 53](#)).

BOARD BRIEF

IMPACT:

Suspension of impacted Board policy and regulatory provisions aligns ACPS operations with VBOE and VDOE waivers and guidelines intended to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on students' academic instruction, assessment, and record-keeping.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends the School Board review the information regarding impacted policies and regulations.

CONTACTS:

Jennifer Abbruzzese, policy@acps.k12.va.us