



COVID-19 Weekly Update



Week of March 23-27, 2020

The Role of the School Board in Responding to the Coronavirus

With the uncertainty surrounding the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the public is looking to their school governance teams to provide a unified message to employees, parents, and the general public.

Meetings, events, and normal routines are being interrupted all over the world. They will likely change in your division as well. Providing education and delivering services may look different than you have seen before. Your division may even need to provide services that support the work of emergency management in your area.

There is deep concern about reaching non-English speaking populations with appropriately translated messaging and maintaining individualized instruction for students with disabilities, and providing related medical services for our most vulnerable students. And this is just the tip of the iceberg for divisions across the state.

Your board and superintendent have vital and unique roles to play as this unprecedented event unfolds. With the situation changing daily, best practices are as important as ever.

Here's what school board members can do to best serve their school division.

The school board and superintendent should stay connected

Social distancing is the buzz word, but governance teams need to stay together, even if at a distance. Though in-person meetings are discouraged, stay in touch with your governance team members. Stay connected with your community. They are looking for your division's calm and capable leadership.

The Office of the Attorney General has provided an [opinion \(dated March 20, 2020\)](#) on meetings for public bodies during this time. Please make sure you review this information when preparing for your upcoming meetings. Please consult local counsel, contact the Office of the Attorney General, or call VSBA Legal Services at 1-800-446-8722 for any questions that you may have regarding meetings.

The leadership team should be thinking about how remote meetings will work when trying to involve the wider community in these times, too. Proactively seeking community partnerships (private and public) to extend web access into the community is one option to explore.

As your team discovers what works best for remote meetings and distance learning, share those best practices and resources (digital or analog) with neighboring school divisions.

Let your superintendent lead

This is the time for your superintendent to manage the division. They need to make most

decisions that are being made at this time.

Allow your superintendent or other designated spokesperson to continue to be the voice and face of your division. Relying on the chain of command- or channel of communication- as a best practice is as important as ever.

There's no need to publicly challenge your superintendent's decisions right now. It only leads to more confusion in the community. Stay in regular contact with your superintendent, and call emergency board meetings only when the meeting is necessary for the good and welfare of your division.

The leadership team should know the message

Make sure your division maintains a unified public message, and remember to let your superintendent or other designated person to be the official voice of your division.

Promote messages that are:

- Supported by your full leadership team
- Clear, calm, and reassuring
- Factual (Here's what we know, here's what we are doing, here are organizations we are working with.)
- Showing leadership in communicating about health practices (not just school stuff). Schools are often the primary source of information about health and nutrition

Take time to connect with your community, too. Share positive messages through video on social media. Share hope, gratitude, and compassion in a world facing panic and a pandemic.

Online learning opportunities for school boards

VSBA is focused on everyone's health and safety as we continue to monitor the implications of COVID-19. Some of our events are being canceled or postponed. We've created a page of [VSBA's Response to COVID-19](#) to help track those changes and to let you know what the association is doing during this time. There are still numerous continuing education opportunities available.

- There is an upcoming Live Webinar on April 3, with more information about [The School Board's Role During a Crisis](#). View other upcoming live webinars [here](#).
- [VSBA Webinars on Demand](#) are available at any time for all members.
- [VSBA School Board News Podcast](#) episodes are available for listening on your own schedule.
- VSBA Staff is available to answer questions by phone or email. Please email the appropriate staff or call the main office line to be transferred to speak with anyone on staff: 1-800-446-8722.

Resources, News & Updates

We have compiled a multitude of resources for school board members, and school divisions to consult. **Below you will find the newest additions.** For the entire collection please visit the VSBA COVID-19 resource page available at the link below.

In addition we have compiled a list of at-home learning resources that are available online for students who are home due to COVID-19. This list will be updated as additional resources become available. This is not an exclusive list, nor does this constitute an endorsement by VSBA for any of the included programs.

Visit the VSBA COVID-19
Resource Page

Visit the At Home Learning
Resources Page

Resources Added This Week

Here are the latest updates to the VSBA Schedule, and planned development.

- [Helping Kids Who Are Feeling Isolated and Anxious After Schools Shut Down](#)
- [Guide from the Center for Workplace Mental Health on Working Remotely during the Covid-19 crisis](#)
- [Coronavirus: Mental Health Coping Strategies | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [Edison Learning offering free student licences to qualifying seniors](#)
- [JASON Learning Resources](#)
- [Nutristudents K-12- Information for school nutrition professionals](#)
- [Federal Update on the Third Supplemental](#)
- [Virginia Department of Education Guidance](#)
 - [Guidance on Graduation Requirements Awarding of Credits, and Continuity of Learning](#)
 - [Joint Guidance Document: Emergency Child Care during Extended School Closures](#)
 - [Memo #076-20 Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities](#)
 - [Memo #075-20 COVID-19 A Parent Guide for School-Aged Children](#)

VSBA Events, Education & Updates

Here are the latest updates to the VSBA Schedule, and planned development.

- All Remaining Spring Region Network Forums have been **Cancelled**- view the Board of Directors Resolution [here](#).
- March 24, 2020 Title IX Workshop: Now Virtual- [register here!](#)
- **NEW!** March 30, 2020- Webinar: Q&A with Secretary Qarni- [register here!](#)
- March 31, 2020 Webinar **Cancelled**: Equitable Access: it's About All Kids – Not about their Gender
- April 2, 2020 Superintendent Evaluation Workshop: Now Virtual- [register here!](#)
- **NEW!** April 3, 2020 Webinar: The School Board's Role During a Crisis- [register here!](#)
- April 17, 2020 Hot Topic Conference, **Cancelled**

Please keep an eye on our upcoming events. As we continue to consult the VDH, CDC, and WHO for guidelines on gatherings we will continue to release updates. See below for opportunities for development you can take advantage of now.

[Register for an Upcoming Live Webinar](#)

[Listen to the VSBA: School Board News](#)

[Read the Latest VSBA Newsletter](#)

[View the List of Available Webinars on Demand](#)

[Read the Latest Federal Advocacy Report](#)

