

FAQs for Missouri educators during the COVID-19 crisis

As educators throughout the state use their creativity and innovation to reach out to students and keep teaching and learning on track, Missouri NEA staff members and leaders have collected answers to a number of members' questions. If you have questions to add to the list, email coronavirus@mnea.org.

Graduating seniors

What happens to seniors who have not yet completed graduation requirements set by state statute?

Gov. Parson issued statutory waivers of state mandates around high school graduation. These apply only to students set to graduate in spring 2020, including students in the Missouri Options Program and School Flex.

- Personal finance credit
- CPR and Heimlich training
- U.S. Constitution and citizenship tests

District administrators should look at district graduation requirements to see if adjustments are needed, make the necessary amendments, and then apply the new policy consistently to all students.

Are School Flex or Missouri Options students who lost employment disqualified from graduating?

Students in School Flex or Missouri Options programs are not disqualified if they lost employment due to the public health crisis. School districts are responsible for protecting the integrity of these programs. If a student lost employment because he or she was dismissed for cause, district educators should determine whether to disqualify the student from graduating, according to DESE Assistant Commissioner Dr. Chris Neale.

What happens with career and technical program students who need to take industry-recognized credentials or technical skills assessments?

The state of Missouri does not require career and technical students to take industry-recognized credentials or technical-skills assessments in order to graduate. TSAs have not been required since the Perkins Act was reauthorized in 2018. However, DESE officials did extend the window until Aug. 31 for seniors to take these tests. These assessments can be important for a student's future employment. IRCs can be used in MSIP as a college and career-ready assessment. There is currently only one testing center open in Missouri. DESE staff members are searching for options to expand capacity while maintaining public safety.

Can my seniors still get the Seal of Biliteracy?

Testing is not currently available to qualify students for the increasingly popular Seal of Biliteracy. 2020 seniors have a one-year extension to take the test and qualify for the award.

Will juniors who took government class but did not take or pass the state tests be required to retake government class next year?

If underclassmen enrolled in government class did not take and pass the U.S. Constitution and citizenship tests this year, they will need to take those tests next year. They will not be required by the state to take the class again. Current waivers only cover spring 2020 graduating seniors.

End-of-course tests

Will seniors who missed a state end-of-course test be allowed to graduate?

The state of Missouri does not require end-of-course tests for high school graduation, but district administrators should check to see if they have local policies that require EOCs to graduate. Districts can amend their district policies.

Will underclassmen who did not take an end-of-course test have to retake the course to get credit?

All students enrolled in a 2019-2020 class that requires a state end-of-course exam are exempt from taking the EOC for that class. Eighth-grade students enrolled in Algebra I must still take a math EOC in high school.

Grades

How do we grade students?

Local districts have broad flexibility over grades and granting course credit. District educators and administrators should look at their district policy to identify changes they need to make, make the necessary amendments, and then apply the new policy consistently.

What are some options for giving spring semester grades?

DESE staff members suggest districts have three options for grades, but they recommend districts consult the Missouri State High School Activities Association and the National Collegiate Athletic Association clearing house about how these choices affect sports eligibility in high school and college.

With the COMPETENCY-BASED approach, the educator determines the degree to which the student mastered the concepts. The student shows this competency through projects or assessments.

Under the PASS/FAIL approach, students do not receive letter grades. They earn credit, or they don't earn credit.

With the HOLD-HARMLESS approach, a student's grade can go up but not down from where it was when school buildings were closed. If a student has an F due to an assignment after school stopped in-person classes, the educator has the ability to waive the F and pass the student. If the student has an F

because he or she did not master the coursework as of when school ended in-person classes, then the student gets an F unless the student shows improved work after in-person classes end.

School accountability

How will Missouri's district Annual Performance Reports be affected?

DESE staff will not issue Annual Performance Reports in fall 2020. They will calculate and report any available data, such as graduation rate, and issue school report cards. The 2019-2020 testing fields will be blank, as MAP and EOC testing were waived.

What does "no APR" mean for comprehensive- or targeted-improvement schools?

As part of accepting the federal waiver for annual testing, DESE staff agreed that schools identified for comprehensive or targeted improvement will keep that designation for four years instead of three years. DESE staff submitted a request to modify the criteria for identifying comprehensive and targeted improvement schools. They expect some changes will be made in the calculations for 2021-2022 designations.

Virtual course options

Can my students enroll now in the Missouri Course Access Program (formerly Missouri Virtual Instruction Program)?

This is a district-level decision, as districts pay tuition for students who take MOCAP courses. If students request enrollment in MOCAP courses, district administrators need to look at their district policy to see if there is an enrollment window. Educators should also consider what kind of instruction the district is providing in that content area. Is the district providing enrichment only or new learning content? Is the student trying to access a better opportunity for education? DESE officials recommend that districts consider what is best for students.

School calendars

Why doesn't Commissioner Vandeven declare an end to the school year?

DESE staff believe that schools are still in session, but school buildings are closed. They are reluctant to end the school year early because the end of the school year means the end of support for students. School calendars are set and amended by local school boards, and Missouri state statute requires 1,044 minutes of instruction in a school year.

Can we move up the fall school start date?

The Aug. 24 school start date is the earliest allowed by Missouri state statute. Changing it would take either an act of the Missouri legislature or a statutory waiver from the governor. With so much still unknowable, Dr. Chris Neale, DESE assistant commissioner, recommends that educators contemplate this question: Given the loss of meaty instruction, when will we need to start instruction, and what will it take to make that happen?

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Summer school transportation? Start school earlier in the fall? But almost as he spoke, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, came out with a recommendation for school buildings to remain closed until fall.

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