



During this incredibly difficult time in our nation and world regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage school counselors to 1) be vigilant in minding the safety and security of yourselves and your families, 2) stay abreast of information provided by the State Department of Education and other reputable sources, and 3) be prepared in the event we resume school after the [Cessation of School Operations](#) ends. Below are links to some academic counseling resources to address questions that arise during times of school closings, particularly when cessation occurs in the spring when activities such as assessments, prom, graduation, and other activities occur. Please note that this document serves as a **resource** for academic counselors and is for information only. **It is not intended to instruct you to do anything other than be aware.** For official information from the Oklahoma State Department of Education, please visit the SDE website designated to COVID-19 resources [here](#).

➤ UNDERSTANDING THE CESSATION OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS

On March 16, the State Board of Education ordered all accredited public schools to cease operations, effective March 17 until April 6, 2020. See official letter [here](#).

What is included in “operations” that must be ceased?

All instructional services, grading and extracurricular activities, staff development, trainings and conferences must cease. However, essential clerical and administrative activities such as business management (i.e., encumbrance clerk, human resources, fiscal services, governance), nutrition services and maintenance may continue as needed.

During this time, staff other than those outlined above as essential staff, should not be compelled to go to work. If counselors **choose** to communicate with students and parents via school portal or social messaging means (such as Remind), they do so voluntarily.

Where can I find more information?

The recommendation is to stay abreast of updates from the [State Department of Education](#), [CDC](#), [Oklahoma State Department of Health](#), and your local leadership.

What can I do while out of school?

Follow your current academic counseling resources for updates on decisions and operational changes related to COVID-19. [Below](#) are some links to commonly accessed academic counseling resources you can keep up with during the cessation. Visit each organization’s site for its most recent updates.



What do we do about graduation and other activities such as prom?

Except for purposes of state funding and school accountability previously mentioned, any requirements for attendance in order to receive course grades or credit, *graduation or participation in an activity are solely determined at the local school district level.*

For the graduating class of 2019-2020, each district is to have adopted a plan that establishes the assessment or assessments those students are required to take in order to graduate. Awarding of credits, attendance and assessment requirements for graduation are solely determined at the local school district level. Please refer to the [FAQ](#) provided by the State Department of Education for guidance on graduation, prom, and other extracurricular activities. Updates to these FAQs will be made as necessary based on current, relevant and available data.

➤ WHAT COULD I KEEP UP WITH WHILE SCHOOL IS OUT?

To assist students and families upon return to school, it is recommended that academic counselors stay tuned to the following:

Assessments

For statewide assessment information, see the most current [SDE FAQ For Public Schools on COVID-19](#). For general college and career readiness information not related to statewide CCRA, visit the website of each assessment organization for changes in testing dates and registration information. As with all testing matters, consult with your district assessment staff and test coordinators for information specific to your district and/or site.

ACT--April 4 test rescheduled to June 13. Visit the ACT Newsroom & Blog for updates.

SAT--March and May test dates cancelled. Visit CollegeBoard's [website](#) for more information.

AP-- As of March 17, the AP Program is developing resources to help schools support student learning during extended closures, as well as a solution that would allow students to test at home, depending on the situation in May. Additional information will be posted by March 20.

IB--International Baccalaureate plans to update their site daily for the most current information.

Career Tech

K-12 public school students may not attend classes during the Cessation of School Operations. This includes attending Career Tech courses. For more information on Career Tech's response, visit their [website](#) dedicated to the coronavirus pandemic.



Concurrent Enrollment

As of the [March 17, 2020 FAQ](#) provided by the SDE, students who are engaged in concurrent enrollment may possibly be able to continue courses according to the status and information provided by the higher education institution in which they are enrolled. Decisions regarding operations of collegiate institutions are made by the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#). Students should stay in touch with their professors and the institution's student portal for additional information.

Financial Aid

Spring is the time for counselors to assist students with making final college and workforce decisions as well as finalizing scholarship applications, the FAFSA, athletic eligibility, and OK Promise requirements. Stay abreast of opportunities that may be afforded students with extended deadlines, waived requirements, and other accommodations made by our educational partners.

- [FAFSA](#)—Check the website link for more information.
- [OCCF](#)—Scholarship luncheons scheduled March 31 thru April 3 have been cancelled. Email j.schwager@occf.org if you have Reviewer questions or contact scholarships@occf.org for more general information.
- [NCAA](#)—Prospective student-athletes should always stay in touch with the collegiate coach/recruiter. Uploading of final transcripts will need to be monitored by school counselors. Stay informed as to how your district plans to graduate seniors.
- [OK Promise](#)—Per the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#), as of March 18 the OK Promise staff have been placed on telework status until further notice. If you are bored and want to update OK Promise verifications for seniors, now is a good time. Make a note to check with the OK Promise office when you return to work for any information on finalizing senior verifications.

Online Instruction

If students are currently using online platforms to complete coursework, students may still be able to continue utilizing them. Students cannot come to the school to use computer labs. If you have designated a teacher to monitor this, they are not allowed to instruct while the Cessation of Operations is in place. If parents ask what they can do to keep the students engaged, organizations such as [Khan Academy](#) and Zoom have made resources available. Accessing these resources are at the parent's discretion and to be followed through by the parent and student, not school staff. Be mindful that many local libraries are closed and are not available as a resource at this time.



CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR ACADEMIC COUNSELORS

Scheduling—SY2021

With the Cessation of School Operations in place through April 6, 2020, counselors should not be expected to report to schools to work on schedules or enrollment for 2021. If you have the ability to do so from home, that is at your discretion; however, consulting with your district's plan regarding scheduling, academic calendar, and course offerings is recommended. If you have ideas that can facilitate resuming instruction, it would be helpful to share them with your Principal. There is no requirement to address such issues prior to April 6, 2020.

➤ HOW CAN WE HELP STUDENTS AND FAMILIES COPE?

The State Department of Education Counseling and Crisis Response teams have developed a resource guide for counselors to help students and families. This was shared via the [Counselor Newsletter](#). Most resources are available from the [NASP](#) (National Association of School Psychologists), [NASW](#) (National Association of Social Workers), and the [CDC](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Please visit the SDE Prevention Services [website](#) for additional resources. You are encouraged to **monitor your own emotional health** and seek resources as necessary.

Remember to bookmark the [SDE webpage](#) dedicated to COVID-19 and check it often for most recent information!

Questions?

For academic counseling questions, contact [Petra Woodard](#), Executive Director of Academic Counseling.

For crisis response and social-emotional resources, contact [Beth Whittle](#), Executive Director of Counseling.