



Illinois State Board of Education

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Current Remote Learning Options Under Illinois Law Guidance for Schools and Districts

The Illinois State Board of Education recognizes and affirms the fundamental importance of in-person learning for the well-being of students, families, and communities. We know that children learn best – and educators teach best – when they are physically present together in the same space.

In-person learning with the appropriate protective measures should be both safe and essential to students' mental health and academic growth. The majority of students need full-time in-person access to their teachers and support network at school to stay engaged, to learn effectively, and to maintain social-emotional wellness. A recent [study](#) released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests that remote learning can be challenging for many students, leading not only to learning loss but also worsening mental health for children as well as parents. The CDC found that students of color were more likely to miss out on in-person learning: Nationwide, in April, only 59 percent of Hispanic students, 63 percent of Black students, and 75 percent of White students had access to full-time in-person school. Restoring full-time in-person learning for all students is essential to our state's commitment to educational equity.

That said, there are several sections in School Code that permit or require a district to offer remote learning in certain circumstances. The below FAQ identifies these School Code sections and summarizes their key requirements. This FAQ is not inclusive of all legal requirements. School and district leaders should consult with their own legal counsel for proper implementation.

I. Disaster Proclamation Remote Learning [105 ILCS 5/10-30](#) and [105 ILCS 5/34-18.66](#)

The State Superintendent has the authority under Sections 10-30 and 34-18.66 of the Illinois School Code to declare a requirement for a school district, multiple school districts, a region, or the entire state to use remote learning days when a disaster declaration is in effect.

1. Which students are entitled to remote learning under the Superintendent's current Remote Learning Declaration?

Districts must provide remote instruction to any student who is under quarantine or excluded from school consistent with guidance or requirements from a local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health. This includes students who are not in-person due to the district entering into an adaptive pause after consultation with the local health department.

2. Should a district provide remote instruction to a student who is vaccinated but has a breakthrough infection?

Yes. A district must offer remote instruction to a student in this situation.

3. If a district has to adaptively pause this school year to prevent COVID-19 transmission, can the district provide remote learning?

Yes. In fact, a district must provide remote learning during an adaptive pause. The decision to enter into an adaptive pause must be made in consultation with the local health department.

4. What are the clock hour requirements for students who receive remote learning under Section 10-30 during school year 2021-22?

The remote learning requirements are the same as they were last year – specifically, five hours of a combination of instruction and schoolwork, with a strong recommendation that districts strive to provide all their students with at least 2.5 hours of synchronous learning with real-time instruction and interaction between students and their teachers.

5. Can a district utilize its remote learning plan from last school year to implement the Section 10-30 remote learning requirement in school year 2021-22?

Yes. The requirement for a remote learning plan under Section 10-30 is satisfied as long as the plan is adopted by the district superintendent, posted on the district's website, and periodically reviewed and amended, as needed, to ensure the plan meets the needs of all students. A district's remote learning plan must provide for five hours of a combination of instruction and schoolwork. ISBE strongly recommends that districts strive to provide all of their students with at least 2.5 hours of synchronous learning with real-time instruction and interaction between students and their teachers.

6. Can a district with an approved e-learning plan use that plan as its remote learning plan under Section 10-30?

Yes. An e-learning plan can be utilized as a district's remote learning plan as long as all criteria in Section 10-30 of the Code are met. However, a district is not required to have an e-learning plan approved by its regional superintendent in order to provide remote learning under Section 10-30. A district that is using an e-learning plan for remote learning under Section 10-30 should code those days as Remote Learning Days in its public school calendar.

II. Remote Educational Programs

[105 ILCS 5/10-29](#)

Any school district may establish a Remote Educational Program by resolution of its board. Districts that adopt such a policy can allow a student to participate in a Remote Educational Program when there is a determination by the school district and the parent/guardian that the program will best serve the student's individual learning needs and the student meets the criteria for participation defined in the policy. This option existed in statute prior to the pandemic.

1. Is a district required to adopt a policy for a Remote Educational Program?

No. A district has total discretion over whether to adopt a Remote Educational Program.

2. If a district adopts a Remote Educational Program by board resolution, can any student in the district participate?

No. Participation in a district's Remote Educational Program is limited to those students who meet the criteria defined by the district for participation and will have their individualized learning needs best met through participation in remote learning. The criteria for participation must be outlined in the district's Remote Educational Program policy. Per statute, the criteria must include consideration of, at a minimum, a student's prior attendance, disciplinary record, and academic history.

3. Can a district limit participation in its Remote Educational Program to students who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or who live with someone who is at increased risk of severe illness?

Yes. The statute allows a district to define the criteria for participation in its Remote Educational Program in its board-adopted policy. The criteria must include consideration of a student's prior attendance, disciplinary record, and academic history, but it may also include other considerations, such as medical necessity for the student or a member of the student's household.

4. What are the clock hour requirements for students who participate in a Remote Educational Program under Section 10-29 of the School Code?

A student's individualized Remote Educational Program plan must offer instruction and educational experiences "consistent with those given to students at the same grade level in the district."

III. Home/Hospital Instruction

[105 ILCS 5/14-13.01\(a\)](#), [23 Ill Admin. Code 1.520](#), and [23 Ill Admin. Code 226.300](#)

Home/hospital services are provided to a student when a physician licensed to practice medicine in all of its branches, a licensed physician assistant, or a licensed advanced practice registered nurse determines that the student will be absent or is anticipated to be absent from school for a minimum of 10 days during the school year due to a medical condition. The requirements for Home/Hospital Instruction are the same now as they were prior to the pandemic. A comprehensive FAQ specific to Home/Hospital Instruction can be found [here](#).

IV. E-Learning

[105 ILCS 5/10-20.56](#)

A school board may adopt a policy for an e-learning program wherein students can receive instruction electronically while they are not in the building. E-learning days can only be used in lieu of a scheduled emergency day and are limited to the minimum number of emergency days in the approved school calendar (five). This option existed in statute prior to the pandemic.

1. Is a district required to adopt a policy for e-learning?

No. A district has total discretion over whether to adopt an E-Learning Program.

2. Are any of the procedural requirements for establishing and maintaining an E-Learning Program waived for the 2021-22 school year?

No. All of the procedural requirements that a district must follow to establish and maintain an E-Learning Program are in effect this school year. Specifically, before a school board adopts a new policy for e-learning or renews an existing policy, it must hold a public hearing at a regular or special board meeting where the public will have an opportunity to comment. Notice of such hearing must be provided at least 10 days prior to the hearing in accordance with the requirements outlined in statute. The regional office of education must verify that the plan provides access for all students by September 1 annually. An E-Learning Program adopted in accordance with these procedural requirements is valid for three years.

3. Can a district use an e-learning day in lieu of an emergency day if the district feels that conditions related to COVID-19 constitute an emergency and determines to close all district school buildings?

School districts may not enter into an adaptive pause without first consulting with their local health department. If in discussions with the local health department, it is determined that an adaptive pause is needed, remote learning days must be offered for the duration of the adaptive pause.

If a district has an approved e-learning plan, it can use an e-learning day in lieu of an emergency day to close buildings under a multitude of circumstances. However, e-learning days are limited to five per year.

4. What are the clock hour requirements during an e-learning day?

Each student participating in an e-learning day must receive at least five clock hours of instruction or school work.

For further questions, please contact the COVID-19 team at covid19@isbe.net.

Please see next page for a chart comparing the current remote learning options under Illinois law.

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That said, there are several sections in School Code that permit or require a district to offer remote learning in certain circumstances. The below chart identifies these School Code sections and summarizes their key requirements. The chart is not inclusive of all legal requirements. School and district leaders should consult with their own legal counsel for proper implementation.

	Disaster Proclamation Remote Learning <u>105 ILCS 5/10-30</u> and <u>105 ILCS 5/34-18.66</u>	Remote Educational Programs <u>105 ILCS 5/10-29</u>	Home/Hospital Services <u>105 ILCS 5/14-13.01(a)</u> , <u>23 Ill Admin. Code 1.520</u> , and <u>23 Ill Admin. Code 226.300</u>	E-Learning <u>105 ILCS 5/10-20.56</u>
Student Eligibility	Any student who is under quarantine or excluded from school consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health. This includes students who are not in-person due to the district entering into an adaptive pause after consultation with the local public health department	Students for whom remote learning “will best serve the student's individual learning needs” as determined by the “school district, pursuant to adopted school board policy and a person authorized to enroll the student.” The adopted school board policy shall include “criteria for determining that a Remote Educational Program will best serve a student's individual learning needs.” ➤ The criteria must include consideration of, at a minimum, a student's prior attendance, disciplinary record, and academic history. The district may include additional criteria, including a medical need, but is not required to do so.	When a physician licensed to practice medicine in all of its branches, a licensed physician assistant, or a licensed advanced practice registered nurse determines that the student will be absent or is anticipated to be absent from school for a minimum of 10 days during the school year due to a medical condition.	All students when an e-learning day is used in lieu of an emergency day.
District Required to Provide	Yes	No	Yes	No

This chart provides a partial crosswalk comparing a non-exhaustive list of instructional programs and plans. The chart is not inclusive of all legal requirements. All requirements in statute and rule should be carefully reviewed with legal counsel.

	Disaster Proclamation Remote Learning <u>105 ILCS 5/10-30</u> and <u>105 ILCS 5/34-18.66</u>	Remote Educational Programs <u>105 ILCS 5/10-29</u>	Home/Hospital Services <u>105 ILCS 5/14-13.01(a)</u> , <u>23 Ill Admin. Code 1.520</u> , and <u>23 Ill Admin. Code 226.300</u>	E-Learning <u>105 ILCS 5/10-20.56</u>
Requirements for Developing Policy/Plan	District superintendent shall approve plan, periodically review and amend it, and post it on the district's website.	<p>A school district may (but is not required to) establish a Remote Educational Program by resolution of its board.</p> <p>The school district must send the board-adopted policy and any amendment thereto to ISBE at <u>RemoteEdPolicy@isbe.net</u>.</p> <p>School districts also must submit "data on student participation" in a format to be specified by ISBE at a later date.</p> <p>Each student participating must have a written Remote Educational Program that has been approved by the school district and a person authorized to enroll the student.</p>	N/A	<p>A school board must hold a public hearing for the initial proposal or renewal of an e-learning program before it is adopted. Notice of such public hearing must be provided at least 10 days prior to the hearing by the methods specified in the statute.</p> <p>Plan must be verified by Regional Office of Education or Intermediate Service Center for the school district on or before September 1 annually.</p>
Clock Hour Requirements	<p>A least five clock hours per day of a combination of instruction and schoolwork for each student who would normally receive a full day of instruction.</p> <p>Strong recommendation that districts strive to provide all their students with at least 2.5 hours of synchronous learning with real-time instruction and interaction between students and their teacher.</p>	A student's individualized Remote Educational Program plan must offer instruction and educational experiences "consistent with those given to students at the same grade level in the district."	Not less than five hours per week unless a physician certifies in writing that the child should receive fewer hours. Shall be determined in relation to the child's educational needs and physical and mental health needs.	At least five clock hours of instruction or schoolwork per day for each student who would normally receive a full day of instruction.

This chart provides a partial crosswalk comparing a non-exhaustive list of instructional programs and plans. The chart is not inclusive of all legal requirements. All requirements in statute and rule should be carefully reviewed with legal counsel.