



# Readout of the U.S. Department of Education's COVID-19 Conference Call with K-12 Stakeholders

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Education and other federal partners held a conference call today with K-12 education leaders representing all 50 states and two territories to discuss the Administration's whole-of-government response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Those who attended the call included representatives from the National Association of State Boards of Education, National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, and elected officials, among many others. During the discussion, subject matter experts answered questions about the process for approval of statewide testing waivers, meal delivery for students during school closures, lengths of school closures due to the outbreak, requirements for local education agencies to provide services to students with disabilities, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements during the outbreak.

- U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos welcomed participants to the call, thanked them for working on behalf of our nation's students and teachers, and encouraged continued communication with the Department during the outbreak. Secretary DeVos also discussed today's announcements regarding [relief from the requirement to test students](#) under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and [student loan relief](#) for tens of millions of federal student loan borrowers.
- Deputy Secretary Mitchell "Mick" Zais gave an overview of the Department of Education's COVID-19 working group, which he leads, and encouraged participants to frequently visit the Department's website, [ed.gov/coronavirus](http://ed.gov/coronavirus), for updated materials.
- Assistant Secretary Frank Brogan of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education briefed participants on the Department's [decision](#) to provide necessary relief from some of the most pressing federal requirements related to assessments, accountability and reporting by inviting states to request a waiver (for the 2019-2020 school year) of certain requirements under the ESEA.
- Assistant Secretary Kenneth Marcus of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) discussed the Department's guidance to education leaders on preventing and addressing potential discrimination associated with COVID-19, including the Department's [letter](#) on the subject, a [webinar](#) on ensuring web accessibility for students with disabilities for schools utilizing online learning during the pandemic, and a [fact sheet](#) on how to protect students' civil rights as school leaders take steps to keep students safe and secure.
- Acting Assistant Secretary Mark Schultz of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services spoke about the Department's [guidance](#) on how to provide services to students with disabilities during school closures throughout the outbreak. He announced clarifying information would be forthcoming in response to questions about implementation. Information on single points of contact for technical assistance to SEAs on best practices and models of instruction, accessibility, and data, will also be provided.

- Acting Director Kala Surprenant of the Student Privacy Policy Office discussed the Department's [guidance](#) on the sharing of student education records during a health and safety emergency under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and identified resources on [FERPA and virtual learning](#) that will be available at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/>.

Representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) also participated in the call:

- Nancy Messonnier from the CDC discussed what schools, parents and communities can do while schools are closed, as well as what strategies school administrators and staff should consider when they begin to think about reopening.
- Deputy Under Secretary Brandon Lipps from USDA addressed the Department's ongoing commitment to feeding low-income children when schools close. USDA intends to use all available program flexibilities and contingencies to serve program participants across their 15 nutrition programs, many of which were expanded by the recently enacted Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

This call is part of the Department's ongoing communications with K-12 stakeholders regarding the Administration's education-related Coronavirus actions.

#### **Participants from the U.S. Department of Education**

Betsy DeVos, U.S. Secretary of Education

Dr. Mitchell "Mick" Zais, deputy secretary

Frank Brogan, assistant secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Kenneth Marcus, assistant secretary, Office for Civil Rights

Mark Schultz, acting assistant secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

Kala Surprenant, acting director, Student Privacy Policy Office

#### **Participants from Additional Federal Agencies**

Dr. Nancy Messonnier, director, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Brandon Lipps, deputy under secretary, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture

For more information on all the efforts the Department is taking to address the COVID-19 national emergency, visit [ed.gov/coronavirus](https://ed.gov/coronavirus).

For more information about COVID-19, please visit the following websites: <https://www.coronavirus.gov>, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> and <https://www.usa.gov/coronavirus>.

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