

## News Release

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### DPI publishes school district report on impacts of building closures during 2019-2020 school year

*Educators overcame various challenges to provide instruction, deliver meals to students*

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction today published a state report summarizing the impacts of school building closures during the fourth quarter of the 2019-2020 school year due to the public health emergency.

Pursuant to [2019 Wisconsin Act 185](#), the DPI surveyed all 421 Wisconsin public school districts on the delivery of virtual instruction, meal service to students, staff layoffs, school district expenditures, and more during the period of school building closures (from March 12 to June 30, 2020). Act 185 requires DPI to send the report to the Wisconsin State Legislature by Jan. 1, 2021.

“The period when school buildings were closed throughout our state brought unprecedented challenges and magnified many existing inequities, as families rushed to find immediate solutions, and educators re-imagined their entire educational delivery model in the span of just a few days,” State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor said. “I am continuously amazed by the way our students, educators, and families have responded to daunting circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our state must continue supporting them and providing the resources and services necessary to ensure their needs are being met.”

Nearly all school districts (97 percent) reported offering some type of virtual instruction during the period of school closures. Districts that did not offer virtual instruction reported providing remote instruction via non-digital means. All districts reported encountering barriers in delivering instruction effectively. These challenges included, but were not limited to, a shortage of reliable internet service, balancing at-home schooling commitments with employment, lack of experience with online learning platforms, caregiving and household responsibilities, an absence of childcare solutions, and getting devices and other materials to students.

(more)

During the time of school building closures, districts across the state reported working with community partners to deliver and serve more than 24 million meals to students using the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Child Nutrition Programs.

Districts were also required to report the number of staff laid off directly as a result of the public health emergency. Most districts (82 percent) reported no layoffs, 6 percent reported layoffs of six to 20 employees, 6 percent reported layoffs of more than 20 employees, and 5 percent reported layoffs of one to five employees.

Act 185 requires districts to report the amounts by which expenditures were increased or reduced due to the public health emergency. Districts reported both lower and higher expenditures in the 2019-20 school year than budgeted, with the “personnel” category accounting for the greatest increase in expenditures, followed by “food service.” The greatest decrease in expenditure reporting came in the “transportation” category, followed by “utilities.”

The DPI also included survey questions regarding staff reassignment, transportation, and estimated expenditure changes during the 2020-21 school year directly related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information and to view the full report, visit the DPI’s website at <https://dpi.wi.gov/policy-budget/2019-act-185-survey>.

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**NOTE:** Individual district-level information is available in Excel format at <https://dpi.wi.gov/policy-budget/2019-act-185-survey>. This news release is available electronically at <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2020/dpi-act-185-school-district-report-covid>.