

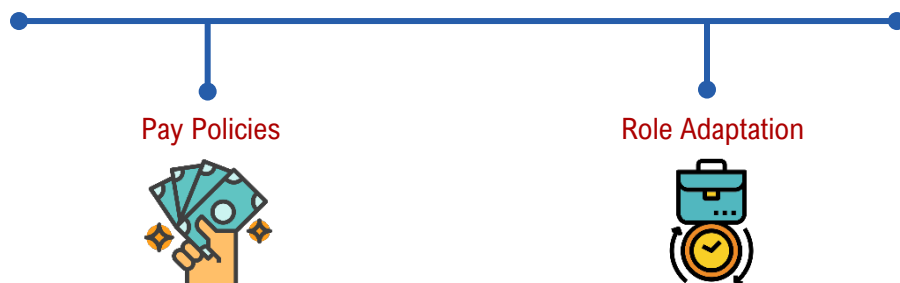
# District Finances in Uncertain Times

How school districts are handling pay policies and roles during shutdown

Facing the new realities of COVID-19, school districts across the country are suspending regular operations – but that doesn't mean their costs disappear. District leaders are concerned about their communities and ensuring that students' family members, some of whom are district staff, are still being paid. At the same time, in anticipation of future deficits, districts must make tough decisions about how they use their money now to make the best choices for students later.

In a recent virtual convening of school district Chief Financial Officers, ERS spoke to finance leaders about how their offices are managing financial needs during the COVID-19 crisis. Among shorter-term concerns are how to handle roles and wages, especially for temporary, hourly, and contracted employees.

There are two main areas where our network of CFOs asked questions and shared strategies about district financial decisions during COVID-19:





Question #1

## What are districts' policies for paying temporary and contracted workers?

- ▶ **Varied Strategies:** In most districts, long-term substitutes and substitutes on special assignments continue to receive pay. To save costs, many districts are suspending pay for other temporary and contracted workers in order to save against future budget challenges. In districts who are continuing to pay all or most temporary workers, historical wages and hours worked are used to determine payment amounts.
- ▶ **State and Union Policies:** In some districts, state policies and union contracts impact pay for temporary and contracted workers. In one district, contracted bus drivers are required by the state to still receive pay in emergency cases where in-person school is suspended.
- ▶ **Hazard Pay:** Since certain positions in schools and districts cannot be done remotely—several districts are issuing hazard or premium pay to any staff required to continue working on-site. This includes staff who prepare and distribute meals for students at schools designated as food pick-up sites.

“We have food service workers, custodians and bus drivers that provide direct services and we’ve been challenged with how to keep them employed.”

-District CFO



## Question #2

# How are districts creating or adapting roles to maintain pay for hourly workers?

- ▶ **Remote Working:** Districts are developing remote working options for hourly workers to allow them to remain on the payroll. In one district, hourly staff on afterschool programs are working with their teams to create training, planning, material development that can be done virtually.
- ▶ **Assisting Full-Time Staff:** Another district is engaging hourly and temporary workers to grade papers and assist full-time staff with other daily tasks.
- ▶ **Bus Drivers:** Districts have reimagined the role that bus drivers can play in helping students access resources. In some districts, bus drivers are assisting with food delivery to students who receive free or reduced meals. Other districts are outfitting buses with hotspots to make distance learning accessible to more students.

“[How] can we engage folks meaningfully during this period? [We are] trying to be strategic about engaging folks and keeping them as whole as possible knowing that they are still hourly workers and you can’t do that if there isn’t work being carried out.”

-District CFO

For more COVID-19 resources,  
visit our [toolkit page](#).

Tell us about your district’s COVID-19 wins and challenges!  
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