

# Recommendations for S/TIC programs in response to possible school closures due to COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

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- Teachers should feel empowered to make the best decision for their individual circumstances. This document is meant to provide options in the event of a school closure and is not an exhaustive list.
- **Here are some options in the event of an extended school closure:**
  - a. **Early release:** Check that your release permit allows for an early release at your release location. Never release your fish in a location other than the one on your permit. One option is for teachers to release without students and take video to share with them later. This release would likely happen outside of school time since it will be difficult to organize a field trip and volunteers at the last minute.
  - b. **Teacher access during closure:** Ask school administration if you can access the aquarium while the school is closed. If you can reach fish every few days for feeding and maintenance, you may be able to ride out a temporary closure. You may also set the tank temperature low to around 46 F or lower. The lower temps will slow their metabolism, meaning they will require less food. Lower temps also lessen the harmfulness of ammonia as seen on [this chart](#).
  - c. **Move your aquarium to another location:** it is possible to transport fish, just as you do on release days, to a new location. This would require planning and coordination to set up the aquarium, chill the treated water, and transport the fish in an aerated 5-gallon bucket with frozen bottles to keep the water cold.
- **Other things to consider:**
  - a. Schools are spraying disinfectants for flu and COVID-19. Be sure to cover your tanks completely with a blanket or plastic sheeting or ask that your classroom not be sprayed at all. Schools have already lost all their fish this way.
  - b. Hand sanitizer, lotions, and soap on hands are toxic to fish. Keep student hands out of the water.
  - c. Auto-feeders are available but could foul up the tank if someone is not able to visit periodically to vacuum gravel for waste buildup. Err on the side of less food if you go this route. [Eheim Feeder](#) is one that comes highly recommended for around \$25.

## Resources:

The latest [“TIC Streamings” blog](#) from Vermont goes into some of this in more detail and collects some thoughts from the National S/TIC Google Group on the matter.

[CDC Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) webpage](#)