



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



March 13, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your participation on yesterday's conference call. This follow up communication is intended to provide guidance related to some of the topics that were discussed. It was compiled with the input of the leadership team at CSDE who have been working tirelessly to provide support to districts in this time of uncertainty. As mentioned, we appreciate your continued communication to the email address shared earlier this week related to urgent matters and updates. Continue to share district closure status through the COVID email.

Below, you will have email addresses for people within the agency who can also be helpful related to specific topics for more routine questions. We will work to provide updates like this email regularly.

Executive Order Clarification:

180 Day Waiver: The waiver means that regardless of how many weeks of school is missed, makeup days at the end of the year **must be added**, but not to extend past June 30. This is the case, even if the 2019-2020 school year results in less than 180 days. It does not mean that school automatically ends on the date of your original school calendar without makeup days. You may choose to utilize days during April vacation. That will be a district decision based on local factors.

This is the link to the Executive Order. <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-7.pdf>

Gatherings of 250+: Social and recreational gatherings of 250+ are not permitted in CT. That does not include essential school or municipal functions.

Supplemental Learning:

There is growing interest in Supplemental Learning to avoid student learning loss during extended absence. This is different from Distance Learning, which is the term used when Districts are applying for a waiver.

While no resource may be officially endorsed by CSDE as a State agency, we will be organizing and sharing resources to assist districts in their efforts to provide Supplemental Learning. Deputy Commissioner Nesmith and Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan will lead this work in the coming days. Many district leaders have reached out stating they want to be a part of the development to create a statewide online resource for districts. If you are interested, please email Jennifer.Michalek@ct.gov and Carole.Dibble@ct.gov.

Additionally, EdAdvance Director Dr. Jeffrey Kitching has resources that may be available for districts to consider. These resources have already been prepared and may be a good resource for districts looking for a "ready to use" option. Please contact either Matt Mervis at mervis@edadvance.org or Jonathan Costa at costa@edadvance.org.

Lastly, Scholastic reached out with free resources for school closure. Scholastic Learn at Home is a free website that provides students with 20 days' worth of exciting learning journeys carefully created by their editors to span the content areas and keep your students actively engaged and challenged.

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>.

Waiver Process

As of today, there were fourteen waivers received. Nine districts will be notified today of their immediate approval. Others will need minor revisions, feedback and potential resubmission to meet the threshold for approval.

Federal Guidance from U.S. Department of Education

Here is a link to up-to-date guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on services for students with exceptionalities. Please refer directly to the federal guidance for information on considerations for the remainder of the year. Also, if you are considering whether you will submit a Distance Learning waiver plan, please pay particular attention to the following excerpt:

If an LEA continues to provide educational opportunities to the general student population during a school closure, the school must ensure that students with disabilities also have equal access to the same opportunities, including the provision of FAPE.

For more information, call our Special Education Division Director Bryan Klimkiewicz, 860-713-6910.

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/bulletins/280d59c>.

Attendance Guidance

Deputy Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker will provide more detailed guidance in the coming days. Currently, any absences related to COVID-19, including parents keeping their children home may be marked "excused." This means doctors notes are not required. We are also working to clarify DCF reporting requirements if absences are as a result of COVID-19.

Nutrition Programming

Bureau Chief John Frassinelli and his team successfully secured a Federal waiver to allow students to get meals as soon as possible and with flexible location options. As mentioned in the call, we will provide support and guidance around efforts to ensure students have meals during the extended absence. Bureau Chief John Frassinelli is leading this work with the support of Special Advisor Dr. Chris Clouet. For more information, please contact John.Frassinelli@ct.gov.

Cleaning Supplies

Our Legal Director Jessa Mirtle communicated with the Office of the Governor (OTG) to highlight the concern about cleaning supplies. If you find you are having issues, please contact the following people at the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services: Rob Zalucki at 860-713-5139 or Cindy Milardo at 860-713-5084.

Coaching and Other Permit and Certification Issues

We are working to address the multiple questions regarding permitting and certification. More information to follow.

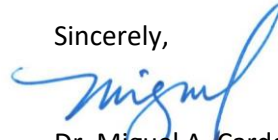
Talking Points

Based upon the request from our phone call for “talking points,” you may use the following outline for discussion with your community:

- Choosing to close schools requires coordination with local health officials because school closures serve as a form of public protection. If done too early, students may be more unsafe without supervision or consistent meals. Not closing at the recommendation of public health officials creates a risk of community transmission of COVID-19.
- The Governor’s Executive Order requires the cancellation or postponement of events that are non-essential outside of school business.
- While not required in the Executive Order, we will limit large convening in the school as much as possible while providing necessary services.

As I stated yesterday, we will do our best to keep you informed of what we know as things change. We wish you well as you lead through this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Dr. Miguel A. Cardona
Commissioner of Education