



COVID-19 Update

March 15, 2020

School Leaders,

I first want to thank you for your steadfast leadership during this very trying time. I have had countless conversations with so many of you and heard in your voices and words concern for our students and support for our families. Thank you.

As the quickly changing COVID-19 challenge evolves globally and across the United States, we will continue to update our approach to meet it. Developments over the last few days here in New Hampshire require us to accelerate our work already well underway on remote instruction and remote support. Our supply line is deep and we will continue to bring you tools and resources to help you succeed in your work.

As I will continue to say, **remote instruction plus remote support results in remote learning for our students**. Students are always learning, whether we engage in these activities or not. Our goal is to help them learn the important knowledge and skills that will bring each of them to a bright future.

Yesterday, New Hampshire saw an increase in the number of cases in the state, potentially increasing our risk of community transmission in the Manchester area. As a result, we are accelerating our remote instruction and remote support plans.

Planning Week: The governor will **close schools for students** effective Monday, March 16, 2020 for up to one week. This will allow schools that have not already done so time to develop and implement their remote instruction and support plans. During that time, the department will provide a variety of support resources to districts to help them build and deepen capacity. Many districts have already implemented remote instruction and support while others may only need a few days to get ready. Schools are encouraged to begin remote instruction and support as soon as they are comfortable doing so.

Implementation: Remote instruction and support will commence no later than Monday, March 23, 2020. This will be go-time for remote instruction and support. I do not think that any of us anticipates that this will happen flawlessly. There will be many opportunities for learning not only for our students, but also our families that we are supporting and our educators who are up-ending their curricular plans for the year to adapt to the new circumstances. My request is that we extend each other an extra measure of grace as we all walk through this.

Time Frame: The initial remote instruction and support period has been set for 3 weeks, until at least April 3, 2020. This is not an end date, but simply an evaluation date for us to determine what the circumstances are on the ground and how our plan is working. We may find that the new normal of remote instruction and support extends through the end of the semester. The top priority when determining when we will reopen our schools will be certainty that our students will be in a safe learning environment.

At 1PM, we will hold a news conference where this information will be released to the public. In that release, we will emphasize the importance of reaching out to school leaders to further understand what this announcement will look like in your districts. Please share this announcement as well as the updated communication from Friday (attached) that we shared with you regarding school closures, with your leadership teams.

We know that remote instruction and support will be a disruption not only for students, but for parents and employers. It is vital that we continue to work with our communities to support each other through this public health emergency. We at the department thank you for your commitment to maintaining stability and continuity in the lives of our students during these uncertain times.



And, as always, we stand ready to assist you in any way that we can. Please do not hesitate to reach out.

ATTACHMENT

Updated 3-15-2020 from Original Version 3-13-2020

Taking a step back from the on-going management of the COVID-19 circumstances each of you face on the ground, the range of scenarios that might result in a disruption of education in your building could be, from worst case – public health orders the closure of your facility to, best case for disruption (if there can be such a thing) – concern among parents causes them to not send their children to school.

While public health has not reached the point of canceling school, many of our communities have reached a point of concern that they are not comfortable sending their children to school. Many schools have appropriately responded to that, respecting the decisions of their families, and have implemented remote instruction and support models.

The basic outline of these models is: **Remote instruction plus remote support results in remote learning for our students.**

This is an “all-hands-on-deck” moment and all of you have been so incredibly supportive. All of us, school leaders, educators, community leaders, and families, parents and caregivers, all have a role to play in the support of our children and their education.

In general, students in 7th grade or older may be able to access remote instruction and support independent of adult supervision. These students are generally over 12 years of age and would legally be able to responsibly supervise younger children in a baby-sitting situation. Children from K-6th grade, however, will need adult supervision in a remote instruction and support environment. Ideally, this supervision would come from a parent, caregiver or trusted adult of the family. This will be the case for many New Hampshire families. Where this is not an option, we encourage (and are working with) local community support organizations (clubs, community libraries, etc.) to support families. The obvious question is that if children cannot attend school, how can they participate in community programming. This type of programming would be limited in the number of participants so that risk of infection with COVID-19 is lower.

Remote instruction: There are many considerations that each of you is weighing when making this decision. The first thing to know is that the state board of education passed an emergency rule on March 12, 2020 that allows you to conduct remote instruction.

“A school district may conduct instruction remotely. The district shall create a plan that shall include procedures for participation by all students. Academic work shall be equivalent in effort and rigor to typical classroom work. There shall be an assessment of all student work for the day.”

We will be providing a Technical Advisory on this new rule shortly, but for now know that you have broad authority to determine when and how remote instruction will take place. You do not have to gain state approval before beginning remote instruction.



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We have given consideration to the broad range of learning resources that districts and students might have access to from full on-line to fully analog and every combination in between. Just saying, some of us were around before we had ubiquitous computers and we were able to make it work. When you are making these determinations, consider the resources in your community.

The department is working with vendors to make curricular and technology resources available across the state in support of your efforts.

Remote Support: This type of support takes two forms (and maybe more as we lean in).

We have [filed a waiver](#) with the USDA, which was approved on March 14, 2020, to create flexibility around our food programs in the state. This waiver will give you enhanced flexibility in how you prepare and distribute food programs. You can get specific guidance by talking with Cheri White in our office to see how this might work for you. She can be reached at 603-271-3860 or cheri.white@doe.nh.gov.

Remote support also includes our IEP students. With respect to IEP support services, we see three possible scenarios.

- The services may be of a nature that they can be provided in a remote instructional environment.
- Another option may be to have a limited number (hence lower COVID-19 risk) continue to come to the school for those specific services.
- Finally, if we are simply not able to provide those services, we may need to revert to compensatory services.

The disruption of your educational system is of course a difficult.

The Department is also increasing its [remote instruction resources for schools and parents](#).

Under the governor's order, school districts have time to hold professional development days in order to build their capacity for remote instruction.

Updated CDC Guidance: The CDC has updated both their [Guidance for School Settings](#) and [Considerations for School Closures](#).

School Trips:

The governor has cancelled any non-essential domestic out-of-state or international travel.

The CDC has also updated its guidance for travel so we are updating our guidance to you.

Everyone planning travel should monitor the [CDC's Travel Health Notices](#) and avoid travel to any country with a level 3 travel notice, which currently includes China, South Korea, Iran, and most European countries. Because of travel restrictions being put in place by other countries, anybody who does travel internationally risks difficulty returning and could potentially face quarantine in another country and quarantine upon returning to New Hampshire based on progression of the global COVID-19 outbreak.

Because COVID-19 has become widespread in many countries around the world, and even in parts of the United States, older adults or those with chronic medical conditions should talk with their



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healthcare providers before travel and avoid any domestic or international travel, which is consistent with guidance from the CDC which has issued a Level 2 global outbreak Travel Health Notice.

Conference Calls: We are going to hold more conference calls to provide up to date information and answer your questions. We are planning to hold these on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at Noon until further notice. We will send out the call-in information ahead of each call.

You can listen to past calls [here](#).

This is a quickly changing situation. Stay up to date on COVID-19 in New Hampshire by regularly checking www.nh.gov/covid19

I continue to appreciate all of your effort and continued focus of putting our children and families first. You truly are on the front line and I thank you for that. If you have any questions, my cell number is 603-931-2071.