Florida Department of Education Announces Additional Guidance for the 2019-20 School Year

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~ All public and private K-12 schools are closed through April 15, 2020 ~

Tallahassee, Fla., March 17, 2020 – Today, the Department of Education and Commissioner Richard Corcoran are using executive authority to support the Florida Division of Emergency Management to ensure Florida citizens are kept safe.

"The containment of COVID-19 is essential, and this is not a decision we made lightly. Districts have taken action and have instituted distance learning as a necessary precaution to protect students, educators, families, and Florida's overall public health," **said Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran.** "We are working with our local school districts to provide guidance and help children who need access to food during this time. Our number one priority is keeping our families safe and healthy and stopping the spread of this virus. These actions will help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Florida. I will continue to work with the Governor, Superintendents, Florida College System and the State University System to do whatever we can to protect our children, our families, and our communities."

Commissioner Corcoran is taking the following actions, effective immediately:

School Districts

- All public and private K-12 and career and technical center campuses are closed through April 15, 2020.
  - Schools are encouraged to operate virtually or through other non-classroom-based means to the greatest extent possible to implement distance learning.

- School districts should be prepared to extend their educational calendars through June 30, 2020, to the extent feasible and necessary.
- For Collier, Duval, Sumter and Union county school districts, which are all completing their extended spring break on March 20, 2020, school campuses will remain closed through April 15, 2020, although they will begin instruction virtually on March 23.
- To support students with identified IEP-related services who may have a disruption in services, school districts are given flexibility for the remainder of the school year to provide alternative services or delay services until later in the summer months, in coordination with a student's parents and IEP team.

Assessments, Accountability and Promotion

- All remaining assessments for school readiness, voluntary prekindergarten and K-12 assessments are cancelled for the 2019-2020 school year.
- Requirements for graduation and promotion, and final course grades will be evaluated as though those assessments which were cancelled did not exist.
- K-12 school grades will not be calculated for 2019-2020 and schools in turnaround may continue their current status for 2020-2021 to avoid disruption to school leadership and operations.
- Eligibility for Florida Bright Futures scholarships shall be based on available data and results. Tests that were not available to be taken shall not be counted.

Instructional Hours

- The Commissioner may reduce required instructional hours as necessary to accommodate for closures.

Funding

- The Florida Department of Education and K-12 school districts are instructed to redirect unspent 2019-2020 funds from Reading Scholarship Accounts, the Reading Instruction Allocation, the Digital Classroom Allocation and the Teachers Classroom Supply Assistance Program to help low-income students purchase digital devices and establish Internet services.
- In order to facilitate the remote connection between teachers and students, K-12 school districts are further permitted to redirect unspent Title 2 funds to help low-income students purchase digital devices and establish Internet services.
- K-12 school districts are permitted to redirect unspent 2019-2020 funds from the Safe Schools and Mental Health allocations to virtual and telephonic mental health counseling services for students who need emotional support due to COVID-19.
- All school readiness, voluntary prekindergarten, K-12, career and technical centers and state college programs will receive their full allocation of funding, and therefore staff and contractors can be paid fully, through June 30, 2020, as though there was no disruption in education.

Teachers

- For the next 120 days, exam fees for teacher certification-related examinations will be waived, and test takers who were unable to take an exam due to test site locations closing will be granted an extension to meet these requirements.

District School Board and State College Board of Trustees Meetings

- All district school board and state college board of trustees meetings through June 30, 2020, are postponed and may only be scheduled for emergency purposes only by the respective school district superintendent or college president.
  - These meetings must be convened virtually or telephonically.
  - If there is a vacancy or inability to serve on the part of the superintendent or college president, then the respective board chair may convene an emergency meeting.
  - School districts and state colleges must ensure that meetings held by virtual means are accessible by interested members of the public.

Mass Gatherings and Community Events

- Commissioner Corcoran urges adherence to the CDC's guidance for higher-risk populations by cancelling any mass gatherings, community events and extracurricular activities, including sports of more than 10 people in a single occupied space at any educational program, school readiness, voluntary prekindergarten, public and private K-12, career and technical centers, and public and private colleges and universities.

School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten Programs

- Commissioner Corcoran strongly recommend school readiness and voluntary prekindergarten programs adhere to the CDC's guidance for higher-risk populations by limiting students and employees to no more than 10 people convening in a single occupied space, therefore breaking students into groups as necessary, maintaining social distancing best practices and proper hygiene.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services Offices

- All services provided by the divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services to clients shall be provided solely though virtual and telephonic methods to the extent possible.
  - The Department will work with appropriate federal authorities to seek waivers for any federal requirements that may be impacted.

Postsecondary Institutions

- All public state colleges, and private college and campuses and buildings are closed for the remainder of the spring semester.
  - Colleges are encouraged to operate virtually or through other non-classroom-based means to the greatest extent possible.
  - Colleges should be prepared to extend their educational calendars through June 30, 2020, to the extent feasible and necessary.

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