Maine DOE Newsroom

PRIORITY NOTICE: Important Message From Commissioner Makin

From Commissioner Pender Makin:

As determined by Governor Mills' declaration of a civil emergency, we recommend that schools cease classroom based instruction as soon as practicable and for an indefinite period of time. Local communities may manage this in different ways in terms of scheduling time and logistical support for students and families to access belongings left at school and to receive remote or distance learning materials if applicable.

Schools will also have local flexibility in terms of offering remote schooldays as possible and in terms of any decisions to keep school buildings open for staff and for teachers to plan and conduct remote lessons. The point of this is to align with social distancing guidance which include avoiding *large* groups.

School superintendents across the state have been making extremely difficult decisions during the past several days. They have had to weigh the medical guidance from Maine and the National CDC with the unique needs and capacities of their individual communities and they have received calls from all sides of this issue. Their equally courageous recent decisions to close or not to close have been made with extreme care and under unprecedentedly challenging circumstances, and with the best interests and well-being of their students and communities at the absolute center.

- The closing of schools does not have to mean that buildings are not open, but rather that there is a significant reduction in the number of people in any given space.
- We encourage schools to do their best to provide activities that will keep students engaged, challenged, and learning. Plans for "remote" school days may be approved by

district administrators and school boards. We also want you to know that we will be flexible with waivers on the required number of school days.

- We applied for, and have received, federal waivers that will allow for the provision of meals to students who need them, and we will be meeting with additional funding to supplement where the waiver program is insufficient.
- Maine Department of Education is collecting resources and information to supplement what schools already have in place with respect to providing teachers, families, and caregivers with guidance on how to support remote learning programs.
- We also have resources available on our website to help all to talk with children about this uncertain and scary time.
- We want to assure all that Maine DOE, along with many other states, is seeking flexibility from the US Dept of Education regarding mandatory assessments and accountability measures.

Please continue to check our website for continually updated resources and information, found at **https://www.maine.gov/doe/covid-19**.

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