

May 8, 2020

Superintendents,

Earlier today Governor Kay Ivey announced an amendment to the current Public Health Order. This amendment is effective on Monday, May 11, 2020. The current order is now set to expire on Friday, May 22, 2020.

I have quickly read the amendment in context with the original order, identifying few issues of great importance. Therefore, I am issuing this updated guidance in reference to academic classes, sporting practices and events, graduation ceremonies. As we read the order more closely, if additional items come to light, we will address them as needed.

First, regarding **academic classes and instruction: the order remains unchanged**. We continue on the same trajectory with no in-person instruction, etc. There are no changes in this area.

Second, **athletics and other extra-curricular and co-curricular activities are also consider “in-person instruction”**. We have held this position since mid-March. Therefore, we also stay on the same trajectory in regard to extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, including band, athletics, cheerleading, tryout, workouts, etc. **There are no changes in this area**. Even though commercial gyms are allowed to open under certain circumstances, it would not be appropriate to utilize this provision as a proxy for school-sponsored activities.

Third, **graduation ceremonies** are a different matter entirely. As I read the order, graduation ceremonies are allowed beginning Monday, May 11, 2020 with unlimited attendees so long as the ceremonies are held in compliance with the order. At a minimum, gatherings must be held in a facility that would allow a distance of six feet between families. Family members of the same household may sit together without regard to the social distance rule. Even though graduation ceremonies are not worship services, they are essentially in the same category, so you may find this public health document helpful: <https://alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/assets/cov-sah-worship.pdf>.

Also, the recommendations for individuals found in Section 1 should be included in graduation ceremony participation:

“All individuals—and especially vulnerable persons—are encouraged to exercise personal responsibility in slowing the spread of COVID-19 by:

- a. Minimizing travel outside the home, especially if sick;*
- b. Wearing face coverings around people from other households when it is necessary to leave the home;*
- c. Washing hands frequently with soap and water or hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces;*
- d. Refraining from touching one’s face;*
- e. Sneezing or coughing into a tissue, or the inside of one’s elbow; and*
- f. Disinfecting frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.”*

Fourth, next week I will begin attending a series of meetings sponsored by AHSAA with coaches, medical experts, and others to continue our discussion around summer and fall activities. We will ask these

practitioners and experts to advise us around developing new guidance for athletic activities, which could be extended to other extra-curricular and co-curricular activities (e.g. band, cheer, etc.).

Fifth, **Appendix D to the Academic and Technical Guidance Emergency School Closing** is attached. Please share this widely with your staff members as needed.

Finally, I close this correspondence once again with an expression of my sincere appreciation for your tireless efforts amid these strange times.

Best regards,

Eric S. Mackey

State Superintendent of Education