

April 3, 2020

Superintendents,

It looks to be a busy evening and, thus, my second message to you this afternoon. I wanted to get the first message out in a hurry so that you would know that your approved plans remain valid after today's public health order. I am already receiving some requests to amend those plans, and we will certainly give strong consideration to any requested amendment that fulfills educational opportunities but reduces the exposure risks to our communities.

For instance, if your plan says that you will deliver packets "weekly," Can you now amend that to "monthly"? The answer to this question is yes as it is required to limit contacts to the fewest possible.

In another instance, "Can we just mail the instruction packets"? Again, the answer is yes. Indeed, we believe that forthcoming Federal assistance may reimburse these costs, but we do not know that for sure. Do not rely on forthcoming funds as a guaranteed source of reimbursement. To that end, if you can cover the costs from your local funds, this is an available option.

"Can parents still come to campus to pick up laptops or packets?" Yes, if this is necessary to carry out your plan. However, it is extremely important that you manage the crowds consistent with today's Public Health Order and proper social distancing.

With respect to the Public Health Order released today, faculty, administrators, and staff should only report to schools if their physical presence is absolutely essential to carrying out the Continuity Plan or as part of a feeding program. Please review your staffing plans and amend them as necessary to eliminate the physical presence of staff as much as possible. Anyone in your schools, central office, or other facilities who can work from home should be working from home. No one should be physically present at a physical facility unless it is absolutely necessary. This is more important now than ever. The current Public Health Order covers the entire month of April.

Today, Attorney General Steve Marshall emphasized the importance of strictly following the Order, which has the full force of law and can be prosecuted as such. You and your employees are fully protected so long as you are carrying out the Continuity Plan as approved by me or providing meal service to eligible students. However, anything outside of these parameters may be subject to scrutiny. To ensure everyone's safety, our department will begin strictly monitoring the Order on our campuses across the state.

As for the Continuity Plans, more than 100 have been reviewed and approved. Not all of these have been returned. Any system whose plan had any missing information or required further clarity has been notified. All submitted plans have been reviewed. Tonight, I will email all the superintendents who have a completed, approved plan, but who did not receive official notice today and the plans were read and approved too late in the afternoon to be processed before our support staff went home.

I will be working through this weekend, so please feel free to reach out to me if you have specific questions. You may also reach out to Dr. Elisabeth Davis with questions about your Plans.

*Eric S. Mackey*

State Superintendent of Education