

March 16, 2020 (Update 10)

From: Dr. Eric Mackey, State Superintendent

To: Local Superintendents

Superintendents,

First, I have to begin by once again expressing my appreciation for your leadership and commitment in the face of the unfolding public health crisis before us. We have faced many weather-related and other crises in the past, but this one certainly offers new challenges and complexities. As such, new information is also unfolding daily. Our ability to remain thoughtful-but-decisive and calm-but-determined gives us the ability to be simultaneously resolved and flexible.

Yesterday evening, CDC released some new guidance reducing the recommended limits on mass gathering from 500 to 50. Based on late night communication with State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris, I expect some additional revised guidance from public health officials today. Dr. Harris's leadership and communication have been invaluable during these past few weeks.

I know that many of you have accelerated your local closure plans, closing schools today or tomorrow. Even late into the evening, others were amending closure plans. Please know that while the mandatory closure remains in place for Wednesday afternoon, I fully support your decisions as you may choose to close earlier. You are our boots-on-the ground and remain in the best position to determine what you can and should do locally. Some of you have asked whether you can close early today (Monday) and not return to school on Tuesday and Wednesday. Again, I fully support your decisions as you know best your capabilities and communities.

We will waive any make-up requirements for these three days (M-W), but we do need a record of who is closed. I have asked SSA to survey superintendents, and ALSDE will follow up in the coming days to make sure our list is accurate.

Our collective commitment to protect the health and safety of our students remains our top priority. I am grateful for the many teachers, administrators, and staff who have exhibited extraordinary resolve and effort, going above and beyond, to make sure that the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of our students are covered to the greatest extent possible during this closure.

Thank you,

Eric G Mackey
State Superintendent
Alabama State Department of Education