



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

March 12, 2020

To: All District/School Leaders

Re: Updates and Information about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Dear Colleagues:

As we learn more about COVID-19, I know all of you are thinking about what you can do to prepare your schools and your community for the potential closure of school. Let me be clear that such action is not yet warranted.

There is no evidence that children are more susceptible to COVID-19. Early reports suggest that children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented with mild symptoms, and although severe complications have been reported, they appear to be uncommon. [Here is a link](#) to CDC information on COVID-19 and children.

Nonetheless, we all need to plan and be prepared. The paramount concern for all of us is safeguarding the health of our children, our teachers, and their families. The decision to close schools is never one that is taken lightly, but one for which we should all be prepared. As we work to ensure the continuity of education for our students, we have many flexibilities at our disposal related to instructional days.

Planning for Potential Closures

Every community needs to be ready to support and serve students in the event our schools are closed for a prolonged period of time. To be prepared for this scenario, ***I'm calling on every school district to prepare and submit a closure plan that will support instruction if your schools need to be closed for an extended period of time.*** We are asking that you submit these plans by close of business on March 19, 2020. RIDE will review your plans and make suggestions to ensure the continuity of learning for our children. Along with this letter I am including a LEA preparation plan template to support your planning work at the district level. Additionally, the RIDE team and I plan to make calls to every district leader to ensure you and your team are supported in developing your plan.

To also help with planning, please [review the latest guidance from the CDC](#). If you look at page 4, which applies to schools and daycare facilities, all schools should have already completed actions listed in the first column and should be planning on how to implement actions in the second and third columns.

While virtual learning resources are not a substitute for a teacher in a classroom with a child, they may serve as a valuable option in your plan. We encourage districts to include ways for students to continue learning while at home. Your current curriculum materials may have online options

that students and teachers can utilize at home. Your Learning Management System may also allow you to engage in instruction virtually. Resources like Khan Academy and the NBC Learn on-line library, which RIDE has purchased for all districts, can provide support and enhancement for learning. RIDE will continue to cultivate [a list of resources on our website](#). If you use resources already that you think will be helpful for others, please email those to info@ride.ri.gov.

Flexibility Related to Instructional Days

As you know, every school must complete at least 180 “school days” annually. Thankfully, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the law and the Regulations Governing the School Calendar and Length of the School Day. We have outlined below opportunities for flexibility that RIDE and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education can grant to you to support the development of your short-term closure plan. Thus, in developing short-term school closure plans, you should keep in mind that:

- RIDE is authorized to shorten the school year “for individual schools based on short-term emergency closures for a total of no more than five (5) school days.” See Regs., 200-RICR-20-05-1.12;
- RIDE can allow schools to conduct instruction through virtual education that can “count as a school day” if the [plan for virtual education](#) is approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. See R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-2-22(c);
- RIDE is authorized to approve a detailed school day plan that establishes a school year through the use of longer school days that is the equivalent of one hundred eighty (180) days if it is accomplished through an extended school year. The school district must provide a minimum of one thousand eighty (1,080) school hours of school in a single school year. This figure is based on a minimum of six (6) hours per school day.
 - For example, if a school district has three unused snow days and RIDE can grant up to five days, districts can then make up remaining days in a number of ways—by adding 30 minutes to daily instruction or extending the school year.
- RIDE, in conjunction with the Council, may reduce the number of school days to not less than one hundred seventy (170) days in the event of any emergency brought about by the incidence of any epidemic or the threat of an epidemic, provided that the compensation of teachers, janitors, clerks, and other employees in the public schools of the city or town shall not be reduced by reason of the shortening of the school year.

This situation is unlike any we’ve faced before in our careers. There is a lot we will learn together in the upcoming weeks and months. The RIDE team and I stand ready to support you and your community in making sure we support the health and education of your children in the best ways possible.

In partnership,



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner of Education