

Dear Minnesota School Communities:

Thank you for your continued commitment to serving Minnesota's students, families and communities. The last few weeks of uncertainty have been met by your unwavering commitment and I am inspired and motivated by all of you. As outlined in [Executive Order 20-19](#), Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan and I have announced a distance learning period beginning March 30, 2020 and ending no sooner than April 30, 2020. The order also directs schools to continue to provide free school-age care to school-enrolled students prekindergarten through age 12 for the children of critical workers, which includes educators providing school-age care, grocery workers, and medical and other emergency personnel. Educators are true public servants and continuing access to school-age care for the children of these frontline workers is a critical contribution for the health and safety of all Minnesotans. Knowing that this decision will have significant impact in all of our communities, we worked closely with our colleagues in our state agencies such as the Minnesota Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Employment and Economic Development, Department of Labor and Industry, and the Children's Cabinet to be as thoughtful as possible.

We have also heard that school districts and charter schools are struggling with the constraints of various funding streams to continue to pay their school staff for the work that is being asked of them. That is why Executive Order 20-19 also authorizes school districts and charter schools to transfer operating funds from any program that is not already assigned to or encumbered by staff salary and benefits to provide school-age care to critical workers and any additional transportation costs incurred between March 30, 2020 and April 30, 2020.

As we are moving to distance learning, Governor Walz also included in his executive order that Minnesota has sought a waiver for the federally-mandated standardized statewide assessments, and in accordance with that waiver will be cancelling the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

During the March 18-27, 2020 planning period, Minnesota's entire community of educators, district and charter school leaders, school nurses, support staff, paraprofessionals, nutrition workers, bus drivers and more have banded together to make sure our students are getting the nutrition and school-age care they need, while creating the equitable distance learning plans our students deserve. Everyone has taken special care to keep in mind how to care for all students, including those receiving special education, are English learners, and experience homelessness. The stories

I've heard of the innovation and creativity across our state reflect an understanding of the significance of this assignment. I am confident in your preparation to provide a high-quality education in an equitable distance learning setting so that come March 30, 2020, teaching and learning will continue.

Thank you again to all of you for your partnership and leadership in dedicating your efforts to student safety as well as teaching and learning during these extraordinary circumstances. I believe there is no problem a group of educators cannot solve and together, we will meet the demands of this unprecedented moment.

Together,

Mary Cathryn Ricker, NBCT
Education Commissioner