



COLORADO
Department of Education
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

April 10, 2020

Superintendents and BOCES Executive Directors,

I hope this email finds you healthy—both mentally and physically! I know it can be hard on some days. I so appreciate the dedication and time you and your staff are committing to remote learning strategies during this challenging time. We know that switching your entire instructional practice has not been easy and that families are in very different stages of being able to engage.

CDE has been contacted a few times recently for clarification on the instructional time waiver and whether districts may end school early. Based upon these contacts, I thought it might be helpful to clarify that the intent of the instructional time waiver is to support good faith efforts to continue distance learning during the pandemic. CDE sought not to be overly prescriptive on the details of the exact number of instructional hours. We were assuming and expecting districts to get as close as they could to continuing instruction and learning through the end of the school year.

As we all know, this situation has been, and continues to be, a moving target. Now that we know the sustained length of this crisis we feel the need to reaffirm the governor's executive order and our intention -- which is that alternative learning opportunities continue for the remainder of the scheduled school year. We know this is a very challenging situation and the frustration and exhaustion is high, but we still want instruction to continue through the end of the school year.

We recognize that districts may want to close out the school year a few days early because it will take a bit more time for staff to complete end-of-year duties and students to retrieve personal belongings given personal distancing requirements. It is not necessary to adjust your waiver request if you feel the need to end your school year a few days early.

But, if you are considering closing school a week or more earlier than scheduled:

- Please call us to see if we can help you overcome some of the challenges and brainstorm ways to still stay as connected as possible to students and families. Please connect with your Field Services representative or Turnaround Support Manager;
- Consider adding days on to next year's instructional calendar;
- Consider options for summer school and bridge programs. We are working on guidance and ideas here to be coming out soon.



Please keep in mind that ending the school year early may also impact the transition from emergency feeding to traditional summer food service program as described below:

- Emergency feeding via the summer food service program occurs during unanticipated school closures. After the school year officially ends, CDE does anticipate meal sites needing to switch to traditional summer meal operations.
- There are not many differences between the two programs. All of our [current waivers](#) apply to both emergency feeding and traditional summer programs and are good through June 30, 2020, with the possibility of extension if the pandemic persists.
- We also recognize that this summer may not be normal because of the pandemic. We continue to seek additional guidance from USDA on transitioning to traditional summer meal operations to help ensure a seamless transition. We are committed to making the transition as easy as possible.
- For rural districts that are utilizing the Meals to You home delivery program, this program will have to end when the school year officially ends. We will work with USDA to see if additional flexibilities could occur during the summer months, but at this time this flexibility is not available.

A reminder that we are requesting districts email a copy of their most representative communication(s) about remote learning plans to CDE Chief Operating Officer, Jennifer Okes, at okes_j@cde.state.co.us by April 17, 2020. Please let Jennifer know if you anticipate any challenge in being able to share this information by that time, and we can work with you. We have updated our [guidance on instruction time](#). Please contact your Field Services representative if you have any questions.

Again, thank you for your tireless work as you respond, adapt and support your educators and families during this time! I am inspired by what you are doing and I appreciate each of you.

Please take care,



Katy Anthes, Ph.D.
Commissioner

