

Legislative Update

Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators | July 3, 2020



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Summary

The big news this week in Lansing was the release of the Governor's Return to School Roadmap developed by the Governor's Return to School Advisory Council, as described in [Executive Order 2020-142](#). The Roadmap sets out guidance for districts and health departments to follow as we prepare to return to in-person learning this fall. Many folks have asked about templates around this work, and as a reminder, MASA is working with the GELN Continuity of Learning Task Force in preparing a template for the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. The template, which is expected to be distributed early next week, will include all requirements and be aligned to the Roadmap. MASA members will be notified via email when the template is available. Please stay tuned for this important information.

In the meantime, your budget is passed and it's a holiday weekend. Enjoy some time with your family and friends – socially distanced, of course!

Governor Releases Return to School Roadmap

As anticipated, the Governor's Return to School Advisory Council released its [Return to School Roadmap](#) on Tuesday.

In May, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced the creation of the Return to School Advisory Council via [Executive Order 2020-88](#), and began a formal process for determining how schools may be able to reopen in the fall. The panel is comprised of students, parents, frontline educators, administrators and public health officials.

The 63-page document provides comprehensive guidance to help local school districts create plans for in-person learning this fall, including guidelines as to the types of safety protocols that will be required or recommended at each phase. The safety protocols detailed in the Roadmap includes guidance on the use of PPE, good hygiene, cleaning/disinfecting, spacing in classrooms, screening for symptoms, athletics, and more. The Roadmap also recognizes the impact COVID-19 has had on students' and educators' mental health and offers guidance on how schools can address this issue.

The plan lays out specific guidelines for facial coverings at school depending on the phase your community is in of the MI Safe Start Plan:

In Phase 4:

- Facial coverings must always be worn by staff except for meals.
- Facial coverings must be worn by PK-12 students, staff, and bus drivers during school transportation.
- Facial coverings must always be worn in hallways and common areas by PK-12 students in the building except for during meals.
- Facial Coverings must be worn in classrooms by all staff and students grade 6-12 only.

In Phase 5, these steps will be **strongly recommended**, but there will ultimately be some flexibility and local communities will need to document their decision in their plan.

For athletics, the plan also spells out protocols for athletics in different phases of the MI Safe Start Plan.

In Phase 4:

- Students, teachers, and staff must use proper hand hygiene techniques before and after every practice, event, or other gathering.
- Every participant should confirm that they are healthy and without any symptoms prior to any event.
- All equipment must be disinfected before and after use.
- Spectators are allowed provided that facial coverings are used by observers and six feet of social distancing can be maintained at all times.

The Michigan High School Athletic Association and the National Federation of State High School Associations are continuing to develop guidance for how sports can be played safely. Gov. Whitmer is also calling on MHSAA to consider postponing fall sports where social distancing is impossible to the spring, and instead running some of the more individualized sports – like track and field, tennis, and soccer – in the fall.

On Tuesday, Gov. Whitmer also signed [E.O. 2020-142](#) requiring school districts to adopt a COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan laying out how they will protect students and educators across the various phases of the MI Safe Start Plan.

As mentioned above, look for templates related to the Roadmap next week.

Whitmer, Republican Leaders Reach Budget Agreement

On Monday, Gov. Whitmer, House Speaker Chatfield and Senate Majority Leader Shirkey surprisingly [announced a budget deal for the 2019-20 fiscal year](#). The proposal would use \$950 million in federal coronavirus relief funds (CRF). Under the agreement, the state will use \$350 million from the Budget Stabilization Fund and issue a state hiring freeze and other reductions to save \$490 million in savings. We expect a \$256 million reduction to K-12 schools, a \$200 million reduction to universities and community colleges, a \$97 million reduction to local governments, \$475 million in public safety costs now eligible for federal coronavirus relief funds and \$340 million in continued enhanced federal Medicaid matching funds, allowing for a reduction in General Fund that had been appropriated for COVID-19 response costs.

For school funding, \$256 million will be cut from the foundation allowance and \$60 million cut from categoricals **in the current budget year**. The details on what categoricals will be reduced have not been finalized. The foundation allowance cut will equal approximately \$171 per pupil. To compensate, the state will allocate \$512 million in CARES Act funding for school districts for COVID-19 expenses and expected costs around returning to school this fall. This is about a 2:1 replacement of the revenue lost for the foundation cut.

Additionally, all three leaders issued a joint statement announcing their commitment to continue working to address the remaining shortfalls in next year's budget. Further, the statement included a collective agreement to look "to our partners in Congress for support to help maintain the essential services relied upon by our families and small businesses."

Superintendent Rice, Board President Ulbrich Request Assessment Suspension

On Tuesday, State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice and Board President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich [sent a letter to Secretary DeVos](#) to formally request a waiver of federally required student assessments and school accountability requirements.

In March, MDE requested a federal waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for student assessments and school accountability requirements because schools were closed for all or most of the spring. This week's letter makes a similar request for the upcoming school year.

"Upon return to school, our focus should be on instruction, supports, the nurturing of students, and safe school environments, and not on lengthy state summative assessments," the letter says. "By continuing to waive the requirement nationally to provide state assessments under the Every Student Succeeds Act, you help educators and schools put students first and focus on providing the physical, socioemotional, and academic supports that students will need in the coming school year."

ICYMI: MDE Updates

MEMO #062-20

Supporting Educators in Preparation for Reopening Schools

[Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MiMTSS\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Center](#) is sponsoring a series of free webinars to support educators in preparation for reopening schools. The webinars focus on four themes: (1) Positive and Effective School Climate, (2) Social and Emotional Well Being, (3) High Leverage Instruction, and (4) Family Engagement. Each webinar theme will be presented by national experts in the field with a follow-up webinar by state experts from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). The series will be introduced by MDE executive leadership. http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Supporting_Educators_Prep_Reopening_695457_7.pdf

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

"Rural Tech Project" Challenge Announced

The United States Department of Education has announced the "Rural Tech Project," a challenge to advance high-quality technology instruction in rural communities. With a total cash prize pool of \$600,000, the challenge invites high schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) to develop competency-based, distance learning programs that enable students to master skills at their own pace with the goal of preparing them for the well-paying, in-demand jobs of today and tomorrow. Potential entrants can learn more at ruraltechproject.com and can [join a virtual information session](#) on July 21, 2020. Those interested in entering the challenge should [submit a proposal](#) for a competency-based program by 5:59 p.m. ET on October 8, 2020. The online submission form asks for a program overview, including the delivery model, curriculum topics, and intended collaboration with local employers and other partners.