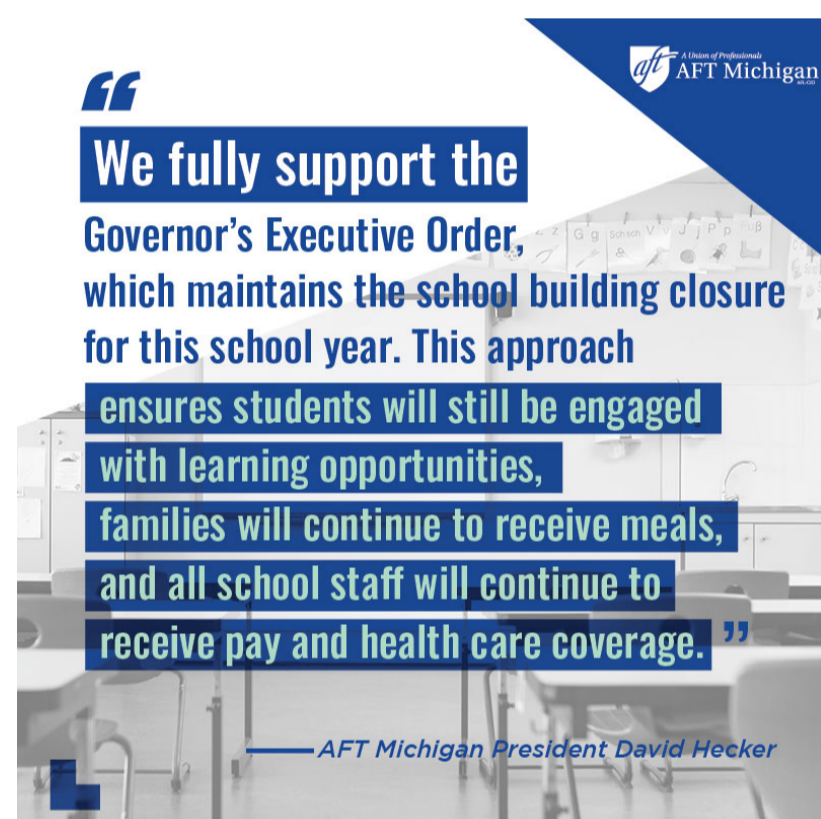


Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed Executive Order 2020-35 on April 2, which orders all K-12 school buildings to close for the remainder of the school year — unless restrictions are lifted — and ensures at-home learning will be provided to students, families in need will still be provided meals, and all staff will have health care coverage.

“My number one priority right now is protecting Michigan families from the spread of COVID-19. For the sake of our students, their families, and the more than 100,000 teachers and staff in our state, I have made the difficult decision to close our school facilities for the remainder of the school year,” **Governor Whitmer** said. “As a parent, I understand the challenge closing schools creates for parents and guardians across the state, which is why we are setting guidelines for schools to continue remote learning and ensuring parents have resources to continue their children’s education from the safety of their homes. There is no video chat or homework packet that can replace the value of a highly trained, experienced teacher working with students in a classroom, but we must continue to provide equitable educational opportunities for students during this public health crisis.”

AFT Michigan supports this decision, and appreciates that Governor Whitmer listened to and addressed the concerns of our members.



“Governor Whitmer made the right decision several weeks ago to close PreK-12 school buildings to students to protect the health and safety of Michigan’s students, school staff, and communities,” President David Hecker said.

“We fully support the Governor’s Executive Order, which maintains the school building closure for this school year. This approach ensures students will still be engaged with learning opportunities, families will continue to receive meals, and all school staff will continue to receive pay and health care coverage.”

“AFT Michigan and our local unions are committed to serving as productive and collaborative partners to local school districts as they implement continuity of learning plans for the remainder of this school year, and to provide additional interventions and services to students in the coming years.”

Main Components of Executive Order No. 2020-35

- **Closure:** School building are closed for the remainder of the year, unless the Governor indicates it is safe to reopen.
- **Days/hours Forgiveness:** 13 days are forgiven due to state-mandated closure, above allowable “snow days” and allow an additional 5 professional development days to count toward instructional time.
- **Continuity of Learning Plans:** Districts must develop a plan for the remainder of the school year to provide at-home learning opportunities for students, and submit an application for approval by the district’s ISD or charter school authorizer. Upon approval by the ISD/Authorizer, will submit plans to MDE and the “waiver” for remainder days/hours will be automatically granted. The plan must include:
 - Description of plan and type of delivery for continued instruction
 - Commitment to continue providing food distribution, pay all school employees, continue providing mental health services, and support efforts to provide childcare for essential workforce
 - If the plan relies on some online instruction, the district should ensure every student has access to an appropriate device with an ability to connect to the internet. Students and families should not be penalized for an inability to fully participate in the plan. Districts may partner with each other or with external organizations/vendors in order to implement the plan.
 - Districts **must involve** teachers and staff in development of the plan.
- **Staff Pay and Benefits:** The Executive Order requires **ALL** staff be paid, and continue receiving their health care and retirement benefits through out the closure period. The EO provides the necessary funding for districts to pay ALL staff from the day the school closure order began (March 11) through the end of the school year.

- **Educator Evaluations:** Suspends requirements for educator evaluations for this school year.
- **Teacher Certification and Continuing Education:** Gives Superintendent additional flexibility to issue initial educator certifications and renewals, to address barriers caused by COVID-19.
- **Attendance:** Waive 75 percent attendance rule since the state emergency was declared.
- **Facilities:** District facilities may be used by public school employees and contractors to facilitate distance learning and meal delivery, with only absolutely necessary work being done in-person, and social distancing guidelines are followed
- **School Calendar:** Districts are allowed to adopt a balanced calendar for the 2019-2020 school year, or to begin the 2020-2021 school year before Labor Day without requiring an additional waiver; calendar and schedule are still a subject of collective bargaining.
- **Assessments:** All spring assessments are cancelled, and all laws requiring standardized testing data are suspended (A-F school grading, Third Grade Reading retention, educator evaluation, Partnership District goals for this year). SAT is postponed for rising seniors until the fall, other high school students will be able to take PSAT in the fall.
- **High School Graduation/Michigan Merit Curriculum:** Districts must develop a plan/process to give grades to seniors, award credits needed for graduation, certify transcripts, and confer diplomas. Districts encouraged to award credit for prior learning/content mastery and/or utilize project based learning, a portfolio/resume approach, or a culminating activity.
- **Special Education:** Districts must follow guidance from US Department of Education, and support students and their IEPs to the fullest extent possible, but recognizes that districts will need to provide compensatory services to students with special needs when the emergency is lifted. Encourages MDE to seek additional guidance, flexibility, and waivers from the US Department of Education related to students with IEPs and 504 plans.
- **MPSERS:** School closure will not affect contributions or accrual of service credits for MPSERS.
- **Collective Bargaining:** Collective bargaining agreements must not be infringed by implementation of the Executive Order.
- **PPE and Supplies:** Permits and encourages districts to donate unused PPE, cleaning supplies and other materials to their local emergency management program.

To read the Governor's press release on the issue click here. https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499_90640-524028-,00.html

