



Dear Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

Thank you for your continued leadership as we work together to protect Minnesota's children, families and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, our first priority is the safety and well-being of our students. We also want to ensure every child has access to the education they need and deserve.

Today, Governor Walz issued Executive Order 20-02 and announced that all Minnesota public schools will close to students by Wednesday, March 18, 2020, through March 27, 2020. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 2019, section 12.21, subdivision 3, the Governor has authorized and directed me to enforce the school closure. During the closure for students, schools are expected to use the time to create plans to implement social distancing practices and distance learning for all students. Starting March 30, 2020, it is the expectation of the Minnesota Department of Education that student learning will continue for the rest of the school year.

Given rolling spring break schedules, we are closing for this period so that all districts and charter schools can have sufficient time to develop their distance learning plans. Some of you have already made the difficult decision to delay your return from spring break to do this planning work, and we thank you for your proactive thinking.

The [Center for Diseases Control has issued guidance on social distancing](#) including specific instructions for schools, which may include canceling large gatherings, staggering recess, regular health checks, and having small groups in classrooms. The Minnesota Department of Education will work with our schools and districts on best practices around social distancing to help determine if this is the best model to allow you to best deliver your educational opportunities for students.

The Minnesota Department of Education is defining distance learning to mean that a student receives daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s) and appropriate educational materials. We have [developed guidance for districts and charter schools](#) for thoughtful planning, establishing expectations for each plan, and offering careful consideration for students in a variety of areas, including students receiving special education services, multilingual learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students who rely on meals served at school. We understand that distance learning will look different in each community, but this guidance covers many important considerations as we navigate this rapidly changing situation.

We are in uncharted territory and the situation is evolving quickly, and we will continue to keep you informed. Thank you, again, for your partnership and leadership in keeping our students safe and educated.

Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mary Cathryn Ricker'.

Mary Cathryn Ricker, NBCT  
Commissioner of Education