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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *April 23, 2020*  Hello Superintendents and Charter School Leaders,  Our first priority will always be the safety and well-being of our students. That is why today, Governor Walz and I, in consultation with Commissioner Malcolm and the Minnesota Department of Health, have announced that the Distance Learning Period will extend for the rest of the 2019-20 school year. As previously planned, student instruction will not be held on May 1 and May 4. These days will remain as planning days to prepare for the remainder of the school calendar year in a distance learning environment. School-age care for children of critical workers will still operate on those days, unless these were previously-scheduled non-school days.  We recognize that this news might be difficult to hear for our school communities and for many of you who have school-age children. Families are struggling with distancing learning at home. And many were hoping to return to our typical spring-time celebrations that are typically filled with plays, concerts, graduation, and other ceremonies to recognize the hard work that students have put in all year. While things look different this year, I know MDE is still as committed as ever to supporting Minnesota’s students in their education, and helping schools think of creative ways to still honor hard-earned student accomplishments.  While educators across our state are going above and beyond to still reach and teach their students, we know that school closures put burdens on children and families and disproportionately impact communities of color, as well as indigenous, immigrant, low-income families and communities, and students with disabilities and their families. We can and must do more to ensure that every child is receiving the education they deserve. Even during these times. Even when it seems impossible.  Throughout the distance learning period, our colleagues have continually assessed the efficacy of the programming and services and issued additional guidance when necessary. Thank you all for this work.  Later this week, the Governor and I hope to talk more about the work that we are doing to help bridge the digital divide and address the opportunity gap so each and every one of our students can still receive the best education possible.  We want you to know that we did not make this decision to extend the distance learning period lightly. Ultimately, we know we must put the health of our students first.  Thank you all for diligent work and your continued dedication to our students and their families. I know the days can be long and the work is challenging, but I know we are up for it.  Together,  Mary Cathryn Ricker, NBCT  Commissioner of Education  [View the updated Distance Learning Implementation Guidance.](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MjMuMjA1Njc0MjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2VkdWNhdGlvbi5tbi5nb3YvbWRlcHJvZC9pZGNwbGc_SWRjU2VydmljZT1HRVRfRklMRSZkRG9jTmFtZT1NREUwMzIxODgmUmV2aXNpb25TZWxlY3Rpb25NZXRob2Q9bGF0ZXN0UmVsZWFzZWQmUmVuZGl0aW9uPXByaW1hcnkifQ.ocBu13iIyPKodRmfty_xHx9m1wGlADzQLP9Wznj4pFQ/br/77775898689-l" \t "_blank) | | | |