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## CDC Recommends Schools Implement E-Learning Plans

*Readiness tool launched to assist Michigan schools, students during school closures*

**LANSING, Mich.** — Recent reports indicate nearly 300 million students worldwide are not attending school because of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Increasingly, schools in Michigan are beginning to explore strategies to ensure learning continuity during planned or unexpected school closures.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#). The CDC indicates that schools should continue to collaborate, share information, and review plans with local health officials to help protect the whole school community. The guidance also states that plans should be designed to minimize disruption to teaching and learning and implement e-learning plans, including digital and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.

“As with weather-related closures, schools should continue to put student safety issues first, while also taking steps to develop local learning continuity plans,” said Jamey Fitzpatrick, president and CEO of Michigan Virtual. “We need to address important access and equity issues, however, a large percentage of Michigan's students have a smartphone and/or access to an internet-connected computer at home that could support the continuation of learning.”

While teachers in Michigan are using online and blended teaching strategies to supplement today's modern classroom, most schools are not prepared technologically to shut down for extended periods of time and transition all instructional activities to an online format. In an effort to support statewide preparedness activities, Michigan Virtual has created a [School Closure Learning Continuity Readiness Rubric](#). Schools can use this free resource to assess a variety of planning considerations to support the creation of local learning continuity plans.

“Schools are encouraged to think about how they can leverage past investments in educational technology to support student learning if they have to close their doors because of health concerns,” said Dr. John Van Wagoner, superintendent of Alpena Public Schools. “In the coming weeks or months, school districts in Michigan may need to close physically, but hopefully, keep learning open.”

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is working closely with healthcare providers, local public health departments, and the CDC to actively monitor the status of COVID-19 in Michigan. Closing schools as a preventative measure to slow the spread of COVID-19 could create

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unintended impacts on students, parents, and educators. In addition to creating challenges for working parents, closing schools could also impact access to food for low-income students, create academic stress for students and lead to learning gaps. School districts are encouraged to stay up-to-date about the latest regarding COVID-19 at [Michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/coronavirus).

“School officials should monitor the fast-changing status of COVID-19 and continue preparedness activities to review and update their emergency operations plans,” said Dr. Christopher Timmis, superintendent of Dexter Community Schools. “We need to do everything possible to protect the health and safety of Michigan’s students and educators, and when possible, work with experts like Michigan Virtual to help us design and prepare our instruction to create supportive solutions to provide continuity of learning. This will take time and we’re grateful that partners like Michigan Virtual are poised to support our educators and students.”

Michigan Virtual has created a [Facebook Group](#) to support educators through school closures by creating a community to share resources and best practices in online and blended learning activities. In the coming weeks, Michigan Virtual will provide [other free resources](#) for teachers and administrators to connect and share, and a webinar series covering a wide range of topics related to learning continuity planning such as effective strategies for online teaching, integrating high-quality digital content into existing courses, digital infrastructure, training, stakeholder communications, accommodations, etc.

Since its inception in 1998, Michigan Virtual has delivered over 300,000 online course enrollments to middle/high school students and more than 200,000 online professional development enrollments to educators. Michigan Virtual developed the nation’s first state-level research institute focused on best practices for K-12 online learning. The nonprofit organization has trained more than 1,000 Michigan educators on how to teach in online/blended environments, and published dozens of research-based guides, reports and case studies that reflect best practices in K-12 online and blended learning. In addition, as a member of the Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance (VLLA), Michigan Virtual staff were active participants in drafting the new National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, the National Standards for Online Courses and the National Standards for Quality Online Programs that were published in 2019.

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