



MEMORANDUM

TO: Michigan Virtual Board of Directors
FROM: Jamey Fitzpatrick
SUBJECT: Confidential Update on COVID-19 Response
DATE: April 4, 2020

I hope you are safe and staying healthy. I will keep this update brief because of demands on time and because we will be able to provide a more robust update in a few weeks at the spring board meeting:

We have built a [Learning Continuity page](#) on our website to aggregate many of our efforts, including:

- [Free digital content](#) from over 70 Michigan Virtual courses released for educators to use with students
- Published new planning/guidance documents, including:
 - [School Closure Learning Continuity Readiness Rubric](#)
 - [Teacher Continuity Readiness Rubric](#)
 - [Teacher Continuity Readiness Checklist](#)
 - [Student Learning Checklist Template](#)
 - Coming soon, ***Learning Continuity: Planning considerations for School Leaders***
- Added six new [webinars](#) that help educators implement learning continuity strategies with more on the way:
 - ***You Can Do This! Transitioning to Remote Teaching & Learning***
 - ***Simple Strategies for Learning Continuity During School Closures***
 - ***Planning for Learning Continuity During Extended School Closures***
 - ***Accessibility in the Digital Age***
 - ***Differentiation in the Online Classroom***
 - ***Accommodations in the Online Classroom***
- Created a [Facebook Group](#) to support educators as they go through school closures by creating a community to share resources and best practices in online and blended learning activities. Participation in the ***Keep Michigan Learning*** group is strong with more than 3,100 members in two weeks and growing.
- We asked to participate in the State Superintendent's Task Force on Distance or Alternative Forms of Learning During Mandatory School Closures
- We are also participating in the State Superintendent's educator writing committee to help prepare MDE's guidance document(s)
- Last week alone, processed more than 9,000 online professional development enrollments for educators.
- We have convened a statewide ***Learning Continuity Work Group*** of teachers, principals and superintendents with substantial experience in online and blended learning. This handpicked group of practitioners has been pulled together to offer practical support during this crisis which could impact the 2020-2021 school year. This group of experts will serve as a sounding board, offer practical strategies and explore new scalable delivery models that enable effective anytime, anyplace and any pace teaching and learning. Our first meeting was held virtually on Friday morning, we plan to send a press release announcing the formation of the work group and identify its members on Monday.
- We have participated in a handful of media requests to be interviewed, participate in podcasts and send video messages.
- We secured a \$1.2 million grant to expand our efforts to provide free access to a subscription-based solution for social-emotional learning resources. The web/app tool provides age and developmentally appropriate content to help children understand how to care for their mental health, how to cope with intense feelings and anxiety, and how to seek help. The grant will allow us to make this tool available Michigan students, educators, and parents through June 30, 2021. This service should start by April 15th.

I continue to be amazed by our team members and their dedication, passion and demonstrated leadership to step up and help make a difference for Michigan's education system. I look forward to providing a more in-depth update at the April 24th Board meeting which will be conducted virtually. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have questions or want to chat, my cell number is (517) 281-1422.



Proposed K-12 Learning Continuity Strategies

As Michigan's policy leaders work to address short and long-term challenges associated with extended school closures related to the coronavirus pandemic, Michigan Virtual recommends the development of a statewide learning continuity plan for Michigan's K-12 community based on six key planning elements. Such a plan could also be used for future school closures related to severe weather, safety, and physical plant issues.

1. **Digital Access:** State leaders must respond to the current access limitations of remote learning days and ensure all students and educators have the right equipment and connectivity to the internet. A plan needs to be created and implemented working with a variety of public and private stakeholders to close this gap.
2. **Teacher Training:** While many teachers have been using online content to blend their face-to-face classrooms, most teachers and schools are not prepared to shut down for extended periods and transition all instructional activities to an online format, particularly for special education services. A statewide online professional development program with ongoing coaching services is needed to train teachers on how to use digital communication tools and online instructional strategies.
3. **Curricular Materials:** To support a personalized learning model which allows for flexible points of entry/exit for students as they demonstrate mastery, a statewide coalition should be established and funded to: 1) assist teachers, parents, and students by identifying existing high-quality, digital content aligned to Michigan standards; 2) educate teachers and parents about what to look for when self-assessing digital content, including accessibility factors; 3) develop and disseminate free digital content and resources; and 4) create a mechanism whereby students can demonstrate their mastery of course content standards and use that achievement as a path to earn grades or credit.
4. **Parent/Guardian Support:** Parents play an important role in their child's education, and during this time of mandated school closures their responsibilities will increase. Strategies need to be deployed to assist parents in how best to partner with teachers and facilitate in-home learning experiences. In addition, our "new normal" requires equal attention and resources to support the social/emotional needs of families. Also, statewide helpdesk assistance may be needed to offer support on technical issues using digital tools.
5. **Summer Learning Opportunities:** Michigan should plan for a significant loss in student learning to occur over the next several months. Summer learning options will play an important role in helping to mitigate those effects, especially for graduating seniors. The State should provide funding opportunities to ensure that Michigan students have free access to online learning opportunities this summer.
6. **Future Innovations:** Teaching and learning as we know it today will drastically change during this extraordinary time in our state's history. The coronavirus pandemic has the potential to create a "new normal" for our students, teachers, and parents as it relates to learning. Policy leaders should consider a K-12 education innovation fund to support thought leadership and accelerate the exploration of new scalable delivery models that enable effective anytime, anyplace and any pace teaching and learning.