

Instruction

Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness

Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies

Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic

The Board of Education (Board) is authorized by statute to govern the District, including the adoption, revision, and suspension of Board policies.

The Board, through this policy, acknowledges school closures in response to a pandemic/epidemic and designates the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee to act as a liaison for the District to ensure the health and safety of students, staff, and the community.

The World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic. Governor Lamont declared a state of emergency and directed implementation of appropriate plans and procedures in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This action included closure of all Connecticut public schools. President Trump declared a national state of emergency.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has authority to waive instructional hours and school days, to interpret graduation requirements, and to oversee the allocation of resources for nutrition, transportation, and other crucial aspects of public education and is providing written guidance to school districts on issues related to COVID -19, including but not limited to student attendance, distance/online learning, high school credit, meal distribution, and other issues.

Temporary Powers Granted to Superintendent of Schools

The Board grants to the Superintendent the following temporary powers to address the COVID-19 pandemic emergency:

1. Authority to temporarily waive such Board policies or provisions of Board policies as the Superintendent shall deem necessary to comply with guidance from appropriate health or governmental authorities or necessary for other effective response.

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2. Authority to take any lawful actions necessary to ensure the continuation of public education, to provide for the health and safety of students and employees, or to respond to direction from appropriate health and government authorities. Such action may include, but are not limited to, adjustments to the curriculum and the provision of alternate educational program options; modifications to the school calendar; adjustments to the delivery of school-provided meals; limitations on access to District property; applying to any governmental body for financial or other aid as may be available; and applying to any governmental body for waiver of regulations or requirements, compliance with which is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic emergency.
3. Authority to enter into contracts without Board approval for any dollar amount for the purchase of materials, equipment, supplies, or services for sanitation, cleaning, technology, or other needs directly related to the COVID-19 emergency situation, provided such action is consistent with all applicable State and Federal laws.
4. Authority to close any school facility without further action by this Board. Such closure shall continue during the emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic until such time as the Superintendent, in consultation with appropriate health and government authorities, deems it in the best interests of the District and its students to open schools.
5. Authority based upon the needs of the District and the guidance from health and government agencies disseminated by CSDE, to direct staff assignments during District closures, including but not limited to essential employees who must report to work, employees who may be reassigned, and employees whose services are not needed.
6. Authority to limit access to public school grounds and District buildings during school closures.
7. Authority to waive the requirements requiring advertising for bids and competitive bid procedures for purchases which may be necessary due to the emergency. The Superintendent will document the reasons for which prompt remedial action is necessary to prevent physical injury to persons or to property of the District.

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Suspension of Policies

The Board hereby suspends provisions of its policies and/or whole policies, as identified by the Superintendent or designee, if such suspension is necessary to implement the written guidance from CSDE relating to containing COVID-19 for the duration identified in the Governor's order of school closure.

Consultation with Board of Education

The Superintendent shall consult with and report to the Board as feasible, appropriate and timely regarding the emergency closure and efforts to implement written guidance from health and government agencies as disseminated by CSDE and other state agencies pertaining to this pandemic situation.

Board of Education Meetings

In the interest of public health, the Board encourages the public to attend its open public meetings via live streaming on television and/or the internet and to limit public comment to written comments. The Board reserves the right to adjust Board meeting dates, times, and locations during the District-wide emergency closure in a manner consistent with the Freedom of Information Act. Further, any or all Board members may attend Board meetings electronically.

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Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic (continued)

- (cf. 1120 – Public Participation at Board Meetings)
- (cf. 2210 – Administrative Leeway in Absence of Board Policy)
- (cf. 3323 – Soliciting Prices)
- (cf. 3542 – Food Service)
- (cf. 3542.31 – Free or Reduced Price Lunches)
- (cf. 5110 – Attendance)
- (cf. 5113 – Attendance and Excuses)
- (cf. 5118.1 – Homeless Students)
- (cf. 5141.22 – Communicable/Infectious Diseases)
- (cf. 5141.6 – Crisis Management Plan)
- (cf. 6111 – School Calendar)
- (cf. 6114 – Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness)
- (cf. 6114.6 – Emergency Closings)
- (cf. 6114.8 – Pandemic/Epidemic Emergency)
- (cf. 6146 – Graduation Requirements)
- (cf. 6159/6171 – Special Education)
- (cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Courses)
- (cf. 9321 – Time, Place, Notification of Meetings)
- (cf. 9325 – Meeting Conduct)
- (cf. 9325.43 – Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-154a Professional communications between teacher or nurse and student.
10-207 Duties of medical advisors.
10-209 Records not to be public.
10-210 Notice of disease to be given parent or guardian.
10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules.
19a-221 Quarantine of certain persons.
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g, 45 C.F.R. 99.

Policy adopted: August 13, 2020