



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Jessa Y. Mirtle, Legal Director

DATE: April 3, 2020

SUBJECT: 180 Day Waiver Guidance

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) acknowledges the multiple considerations school districts must balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Next to safety, student engagement and learning remain paramount, so providing continued educational opportunities during this period of class cancellation is important. None of us can anticipate what June may bring, so this guidance is subject to our continued conversations about what is best for our students and communities.

Governor Lamont's executive order 7E allows for a waiver of the requirement of 180 days of school per year and certain hours of schoolwork so that districts can "close school on their normally scheduled end-dates" when they provide opportunities for continuity of education to all students, to the greatest extent possible. Opportunities for continuity of education are considered "learning days" and should be maximized (through online, hard copy, or other means), but we all understand that in the context of this unprecedented situation, these days are not the same as a traditional class day where students attend school in person.

Waiving the 180 school day requirement was not intended to promote school districts rescheduling the end of the school year to an earlier date than the date publicized prior to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including if there were snow days prior to the pandemic that need to be added. The CSDE continues to defer to local Superintendent discretion about how to approach April vacation.

Some examples:

- A district planned and publicly announced in early March that their last day of school is June 12, 2020, which included any additional snow days. They planned for, and immediately engaged virtual programming for students when classes were canceled in March. The district wishes to cancel April break, provide learning days for 5 additional days in April, and schedule their last day of classes on June 5, 2020. The clarified executive order did not address April break as an opportunity to move up the last day of school. Therefore, the end date for the district should be their last announced end date prior to the COVID pandemic, i.e., June 12, 2020.
- A district planned and publicly announced in early March that their last day of school is June 12, 2020, which included any additional snow days. They planned for, and immediately engaged virtual programming for students when classes were canceled in March. The district will not cancel April break, to allow families and staff vacation time. This is permitted; they may maintain their last day of June 12, 2020. If they prefer, they could extend the school year to later in June.

- A district planned to have the last day of school on June 12, 2020, which included any additional snow days. They have been making efforts to provide continued learning opportunities, but thus far have been able to provide access only to printed materials for students, and are improving the programming over time. The district has determined it is best to cancel April break, because it will allow for a valuable opportunity for teachers and staff to prepare for future weeks. This is permitted; they may maintain their last day of June 12, 2020. If they prefer, they could extend the school year to later in June.
- A district planned to have the last day of school on June 12, 2020, which included any additional snow days. They have been making efforts to provide continued learning opportunities, but thus far have been able to provide access only to printed materials for students, and are improving the programming over time. The district has determined it is best not to cancel April break, to maximize student access to learning days. This is permitted; they may maintain their last day of June 12, 2020. If they prefer, they could extend the school year to later in June.

We hope this helps clarify the intent of the Governor's Executive Order. If you have any additional questions please direct them to the COVID-19 e-mail address.