

III.A.

AMENDED RESOLUTION
CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:

August 11, 2020

WHEREAS, Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sections 10-15 and 10-16 require that school districts provide not less than 180 days of actual school sessions and 900 hours of actual school work during each year (450 hours for ½ half day kindergarten) (“180 day/900 hour requirement”); and

WHEREAS, C.G.S. Section 10-15 permits the State Board of Education (SBE) to (1) “authorize the shortening of any school year for a school district, a school, or a portion of a school, on account of an unavoidable emergency,” and (2) “authorize implementation of scheduling of school sessions to permit full year use of facilities which may not offer each child one hundred eighty days of school sessions within a given school year, but which assures an opportunity for each child to average a minimum of one hundred eighty days of school sessions per year during thirteen years of educational opportunity in the elementary and secondary schools”; and

WHEREAS, Governor Ned Lamont, on March 10, 2020, declared a public health emergency and civil preparedness emergency in connection with COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, due to the public health emergency and civil preparedness emergency public school classes were cancelled beginning on March 17, 2020 for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year; and

WHEREAS, on July 14, 2020, the SBE passed a resolution to waive up to three days of the 2020-2021 school year to provide staff and families with additional time to build capacity to safely transition back to in-person classes; and

WHEREAS, due to these unprecedented circumstances related to this unavoidable public health emergency, and their responsibility to protect to the greatest extent possible the health of staff and students, school districts anticipate the need to utilize a hybrid learning model, or potentially suspend in-person learning for some portion of the 2020-21 school year, and seek clarity as to how such action would affect their obligations under C.G.S. Sections 10-15 and 10-16; now therefore be it:

RESOLVED, that during the 2020-2021 school year only, the SBE temporarily authorizes local and regional Boards of Education, the Connecticut Technical Education Career System, approved state charter schools, and other similarly situated districts (“school district” or “school districts”), to shorten the school year related to the 180-day/900 hour requirement for unavoidable emergency.

Regardless of the instructional approach used (in-person, hybrid, or remote), districts should implement an instructional framework with equity at its core. This Board's authorization for hybrid or remote programming due to unavoidable emergency is contingent upon school districts providing rigorous learning and engagement opportunities that are aligned with State standards and Board expectations, whether the education is in person or remote. These should include, but are not limited to, opportunities for students to be engaged on a daily basis, for students to access grade level standards, and for students to be provided the necessary academic and social-emotional supports. This anticipates that classrooms will provide on-grade instruction that accelerates learning and incorporates the requisite scaffolds and supports.

The school district must make a good faith decision that implementation of hybrid remote learning programming, which has a portion of the student population in a school building on certain designated days or hours, and learning remotely on others, or the suspension of classes and use of a full-time remote learning model, is necessary to protect the health and promote the safety of the school community based on:

- (a) then-current public health data for the geographic region within which such district is located; and
- (b) the actual incidence or the potential spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Action taken by a school district to implement a hybrid learning model or suspend a class or classes and use a full-time remote learning model will be deemed necessary if a school district makes a good faith decision within the recommended range of leading and secondary indicators and also assessing the additional considerations in the guidance published by the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) and the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), and based upon the totality of the circumstances, to protect the health and safety of the school/s community, and after consultation with appropriate public health authorities.


Action taken by a school district to suspend classes and use a full-time remote learning model, at a time when the county-wide data indicators support in-person or hybrid models based upon the recommended range of leading and secondary indicators published by the SDE and the DPH requires submission of a justification for such exception to the SDE and review by an administrative panel with representatives from the SBE, the Office of School Construction, the SDE, and the DPH. This panel may also receive the justification and request for review from a county, region or statewide if required by public health data and analysis of the leading and secondary indicators, and additional considerations, published by SDE and DPH.

In all cases, the basis for the school districts' decisions must be included in writing in the records of the school district.

Hybrid or remote programming must maintain the State Board of Education's expectations for rigorous engagement of the student population aligned with grade level outcomes, and the use of this authorization should be done to the minimum extent feasible.

The SBE directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action, including issuing binding guidance from the SDE as necessary to implement this resolution.

Approved by a vote of 10:0, this 11th day of August, Two Thousand Twenty.

Signed: 

Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Secretary
State Board of Education