

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford

**TO BE PROPOSED:**

October 7, 2020

*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 Connecticut State Board of Education (SBE) passed a resolution to allow school districts 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 on August 11, 2020, the SBE approved a resolution authorizing school districts to transition to remote and hybrid models where required by the pandemic and public health data; and

*WHEREAS*, due to these unprecedented circumstances related to this unavoidable public health emergency, school districts have contacted the Connecticut State Development of Education (SDE) to seek clarity as to how to handle inclement weather events in the unique context of the COVID-19 pandemic; now therefore be it:

**RESOLVED**, that during the 2020-2021 school year only, the SBE instructs the SDE to develop guidelines with a limited exception, within which school districts may implement remote learning due to inclement weather, and to issue guidance to support districts in determining the appropriate approach to inclement weather days during this pandemic in light of the prior SBE resolution.

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

Approved by a vote of \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_\_ day of October, Two Thousand Twenty.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Secretary  
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** October 7, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Inclement Weather During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Provision of Hybrid and/or Remote Learning Models

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**

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 instruction during each year (450 hours for ½ half day kindergarten). C.G.S. Section 10-15 allows the State Board of Education (SBE) to authorize boards of education to modify the school calendar to have fewer than 180 days of school due to “unavoidable emergency.” In the past, the SBE has rarely granted this authorization unless the school district can show that it has made every possible attempt to schedule the lost days before the end of the school year on June 30th.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused historic disruption in Connecticut’s educational system and nationally, and the SBE has authorized flexibility related to the 180-day/900 hour requirement for its schools that comply with certain requirements outlined and where robust remote learning options are available. We are addressing here whether the SBE should direct the Commissioner to provide guidance to school districts as to how they may treat days in which school buildings should be closed due to inclement weather during the 2020-2021 school year.

**Inclement Weather Days During the 2020-2021 School Year While COVID-19 Pandemic Continues Disruption of the Traditional Educational Model**

On March 10, 2020, Governor Ned Lamont declared a public health emergency and civil preparedness emergency in connection with COVID-19. Shortly thereafter, Governor Lamont ordered all school classes cancelled across the state for the remainder of the school year. As a result of this emergency, on August 11, 2020, the SBE addressed the necessity for schools to use remote and hybrid learning models to educate our students while also prioritizing health and safety and authorized school districts to shorten the school year if public health needs required this action – for the 2020-2021 school year only.

After that Board Resolution, school districts have identified an issue that will arise as a result of hybrid models where, on a given day, some students are scheduled to be learning in school, and others are scheduled to be learning remotely, and inclement weather requires the school district

cancel in-person classes because students cannot safely travel to the school building. The potential disadvantage for students who are at in-person school and do not have classes, when their peers continue with a remote day is a concern to the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE). In addition, the SDE believes that the ability of school districts to provide effective remote learning may allow for learning to continue for all students on days when it is necessary to close the school buildings.

During this unique circumstance, the SDE and SBE have allowed for remote learning because of the state of emergency. Within the context of the unavoidable emergency presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the SDE requests authorization to develop guidelines for the 2020-2021 school year, within which school districts may transition to a fully remote model on a given day due to inclement weather. The guidelines may include, but are not limited to, requiring a threshold of a certain number of snow days, and considering when power or connectivity may present a barrier. School districts must also consider Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220a when providing remote access to high school students.

### **Recommendation**

The Commissioner recommends the SBE authorize the SDE to develop guidelines within which school districts may implement remote learning due to inclement weather, in light of the August 11, 2020 SBE resolution and the broad use of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Prepared by:**  
**Jessa Mirtle, Legal Director**  
**Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs**