



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 30, 2020

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Michael F. Rice, Ph.D. 
State Superintendent

SUBJECT: Social-Emotional Supports in a Crisis

In a difficult time, kindness, caring, and compassion are even more important than usual. This is particularly true during the COVID-19 pandemic, when our students need the love, support, structure, and stability that we in schools—teachers, support staff members, and administrators--provide on a daily basis.

At a time when we have to maintain social distancing to address the public health emergency that has taken many lives and profoundly harmed others across the country and, in many cases, across the world, our children need us all the more. I am deeply appreciative of the staff members in many districts who have regularly reached out to students in as caring and as systematic or periodic a way as possible. I appreciate you and, much more importantly, your students and their families appreciate you. It is impossible to recreate school at a distance. So much of school is affective, and so much of the affective requires proximity. That said, even at a distance we can wrap our arms—metaphorically—around the children whom we serve and should do so to the absolute extent possible. We truly are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

As fellow human beings, take a moment to reach out, both in your professional and your private lives, to check up on and check in with friends and family members, particularly those who are on the tails of life—either very young or very old—or who have health issues. Whether people acknowledge it or not, they appreciate the outreach, and you make the world a little better place as a result.

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With the closure of schools and need for social distancing to keep us healthy, attending to social and emotional needs is critical. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) helps to improve our self-awareness, our awareness of others, our self-management, our relationships with one another, and our decision-making. SEL principles and practices are especially important at a time like this.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is committed to providing resources to help support the SEL needs of our students, staff, and families. Even from a distance, crucial and valuable connections already established between educators and students can and should continue. During times of uncertainty, having regular positive communication between trusted adults and students can provide reassurance and consistency. Staff contact with students through e-mail, phone calls, food distribution sites, and other means is invaluable. It's been inspiring to hear the ways that many of you continue to nurture consistent relationships with children in spite of the pandemic. Thank you for supporting our children through this difficult time.

As this crisis affects us all, albeit in different ways given our different circumstances, practicing self-care is also critical. Try to set boundaries, exercise (if only a nightly walk), eat properly and regularly, get some sleep, and ask for help, even though it may feel as if you are taking time away from others.

The department has posted many resources on its webpage at www.michigan.gov/mde under COVID-19 Updates. This [webpage](#) provides SEL resources for children and adults, and offers many digital options for administrators, teachers, staff, families, and children to receive this and other critical content.

If you have ideas for additional SEL resources, please e-mail them to: MDE-selresources@michigan.gov. The menu of SEL resources will be updated regularly to include additional SEL supports. For questions, please contact Leisa Gallagher at GallagherL@michigan.gov.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance