



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING


GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 3, 2021

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

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

**SUBJECT:** Layering Additional Time for Students - MEMO #COVID-19-158

Yesterday, I testified before a joint meeting of the Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee and the House Education Committee. During my testimony, I shared that layering in additional learning time next year would help Michigan schools and students address foregone learning.

As you know, in-person instruction—for most children—is superior to education at a distance and given the pandemic, whether children were educated primarily at a distance or largely in person, most students will have received less instruction from March of last year through the end of this school year than in any similar period of their education.

In my testimony, I shared that the current minimum number of days—180—was too low before the pandemic. It isn't close to that of high-performing nations. Students need more days next year coming out of the pandemic. The state legislature should raise the minimum number of days to underscore the need for and to provide more time.

Beyond what the state does with the statutory minimum number of days, districts must reflect on their individual district needs for three additional layers of time: (1) for the entire district; (2) for especially vulnerable groups of students, including children with profound special needs, fledgling English learners, and beginning readers; and (3) for individual children.

Some districts will need to add time for all of their students, above a statutorily raised state minimum. Some will need to add time for particular groups of students or for particular students. Some will need to do all three.

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Child by child, group by group, districts will have to reflect on what is needed and how to meet these needs. More time is the clearest need. Most children have foregone it. Many will need to recoup it.

We cannot simply go back to a pre-pandemic normal, but must pivot to a new, better normal. We need to aspire to this higher goal for two reasons: (1) many of our children haven't learned as much as they should have in the last year and we have work to do to catch them up to where they should have been and (2) we were improving schools in the years before the pandemic, with an understanding that we had a long way still to go.

Layered-in additional instructional time for students was one of several lessons from the pandemic that I shared with committee members and that need to guide us next year. Additional lessons included:

- The importance of community partnerships as we work to support and lift up children next year.
- The importance of home technology, not as a primary means of instruction, but as a supplement to what we do in schools, as we work to expand support for and enrichment of children beyond schools.
- The importance of social and emotional learning (SEL)/children's mental health and the idea that, while we all need training in SEL, we also need more funding to hire more counselors, social workers, and other personnel in these important areas.
- The importance of early literacy and lower class sizes at the early elementary levels, where teachers provide the literacy and numeracy foundation for children's progress through school and into adulthood.
- The importance of more adequate and equitable school funding, with the recognition that schools in Michigan are underfunded by more than \$3 billion statewide annually, based on the weighted funding recommendations of the 2018 School Finance Research Collaborative study.

Additionally, I shared with committee members the importance of quick negotiation and agreement on the details of a supplemental appropriations bill to authorize the allocation of the most recent federal COVID-19 relief funding and additional state funding so local districts could know with substantial certainty what resources they would have as they plan for next year.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership not only in this extraordinarily difficult moment but in the planning for next year in support of our children's systemic and unique needs.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors