GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 30, 2020

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

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

SUBJECT: MI Safe Return to School Roadmap

Governor Whitmer just released the [MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap,](#) and I am excited that we will be back in school. The governor's plan provides an important balance between protecting public health and helping us provide public education in our schools.

We are in the midst of a pandemic. It is a public health crisis. At the same time, we have to educate our children. This roadmap provides us a framework to meet both public health and public education challenges.

This is a thoughtful set of parameters under which we can return safely and realistically to school in the fall. If we follow our health protocols, both inside school and out, we have the opportunity to stay in school longer next school year than if we assume that the pandemic has run its course. It hasn't.

At the same time, Congress needs to approve additional federal aid so that children's education is not harmed during the pandemic. This additional federal aid needs to include not simply funding to make up for lost state aid in the pandemic, but also funding to address personal protection equipment (PPE) and catch-up learning needs in the pandemic. To those of you that have called or written or have encouraged your board members and community members to call or write your state legislators and members of Congress, thank you for your efforts, which are making an impact. Please keep the drumbeat going. For those of you that have not yet done so, it is critical that you do so.

To accompany the MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap, the governor signed Executive Order 2020-142. The roadmap and the executive order complement one another and should be read together.

The executive order requires Michigan school districts to adopt a COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, in which they detail how they will protect students and staff across the various phases of the Michigan Safe Start Plan. The roadmap offers guidelines about the types of safety protocols that will be required or recommended at each phase of the governor's data-driven MI Safe Start Plan.

The governor's COVID-19 Task Force on Education provided her with recommendations to develop the roadmap. A number of Michigan Department of Education (MDE) staff members and I are on the task force. At the same time, the governor formed a Return to Learn Advisory Council of Michigan residents to provide suggestions to the task force.

Concurrent with and complementary to the task force's work, I convened three work groups – suburban, urban, and rural – to help inform my work on the task force and to help shape MDE guidance to the 831 local school districts across the state during this challenging 2020-21 school year.

I want to thank members of the governor's task force, the governor's advisory council, and our work groups for their work. Now it is time for more granular work, given the broad health parameters laid out by the governor today.

Additionally, I want to thank each one of you as leaders, as well as your staffs, for the extraordinary efforts, time, attention, and sacrifices made during this challenging time. Collectively, we need to continue these efforts to protect and educate our children whom we have the honor to serve.

More guidance will be forthcoming in the following weeks.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance
     Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors