



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education *CRJ*

DATE: December 31, 2021

SUBJECT: Remote Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

This memorandum serves as an update to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE's) Guidance Regarding the Future of Remote Learning in Connecticut Schools dated July 19, 2021, and Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Remote Learning dated November 4, 2021. It includes changes to the situations in which school districts develop local policy to address how remote learning might be used to provide continued educational opportunities. **This update supersedes Question/Answer No. 5 in the FAQ** and is in keeping with the June 2021 Public Acts, under which remote learning is generally not permitted during the 2021–22 school year on a district-wide, school-wide, or individual student basis. As noted below, however, COVID-19 health and safety concerns may dictate very limited exceptions.

Consequently, please be advised that when schools reopen on Monday, January 3, remote learning will be considered an official school day in the following limited circumstances: (1) for students who must be in isolation due to a confirmed COVID-19 infection, or who must quarantine due to close contact with a confirmed case; (2) in rare and individualized circumstances, for students with live-in family members who have documented an unusual vulnerability to COVID-19; 3) in those rare cases in which a Planning and Placement Team determines that instruction in the home provides the student with a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment and revises the student's Individualized Education Program accordingly; or 4) should there be an order issued at some point during the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year that requires school or district closures pursuant to an emergency declaration. **Please note that local health districts do not have the authority to issue such emergency declarations. Such declarations can only be issued pursuant to legislative or gubernatorial authority.**

The CSDE does not direct the specific educational opportunities that must be made available in the circumstances described above. Rather, we recommend that schools and districts continue to make decisions regarding programming and additional mitigation strategies on a case-by-case basis. However, at a minimum, should a school or district offer remote learning or equivalent out-of-school instruction in the limited circumstances described above, these schools or districts must offer educational opportunities that equal at least half the school day so that the student can be "in attendance" using the CSDE's four-part framework.

School districts must predicate determinations regarding isolation, quarantine, and remote instruction on guidance issued by the CSDE, with input from the Connecticut State Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Finally, school

districts should continue to follow local policies and procedures, such as those that dictate closings that result from inclement weather, when determining whether to close one or more schools due to issues such as pandemic-related staffing shortages. Days on which schools are closed for reasons other than those described above (Items 1-4) must be made up in order to satisfy the statutory 180-school day requirement.

Please be advised that the CSDE will be revising its previous remote learning guidance in January 2022 based on the above. The CSDE and DPH will continue to assist school districts in navigating remote learning and other COVID-19 related issues as the pandemic progresses, and may revise operative guidance as necessary.

Thank you in advance for your continued cooperation and efforts to provide safe and engaging learning environments for our students.