



NEBRASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Resolution on the Nebraska Department of Education's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Effects on Nebraska Schools

WHEREAS, The world is experiencing a pandemic of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), affecting at least 181 countries and regions with over 1,000,000 confirmed cases and over 53,000 deaths resulting from this novel virus; the United States has the highest number of confirmed cases of any country, with over 245,000 confirmed cases and nearly 6,000 deaths; in Nebraska, there are over 250 confirmed cases and at least six deaths;

WHEREAS, Commissioner Blomstedt is providing statewide leadership and coordination efforts with the Governor, Chief Medical Officer, and other leaders for all Nebraska communities, schools (including alternative schools, exempt schools, interim-program schools, nonpublic schools, public schools, and schools operating under special purpose agreements), educators, administrators, school boards, clients, and citizens, including the recommendations and directives for schools to operate without students in their buildings;

WHEREAS, The mission of the Nebraska Department of Education is to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living and through the equity issues faced in this pandemic the Commissioner is requiring schools to provide a continuity of learning plan for all students, while coordinating with state and national leaders to ensure a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for those students receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);

WHEREAS, The Commissioner worked expediently and voluntarily to allow for the staff of the Nebraska Department of Education to work remotely or to modify work schedules so as to reduce staff members' risk of exposure to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, The Commissioner serves as the executive officer of the State Board of Education; now, therefore, be it

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RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education affirms the actions of the Commissioner to protect the public health of the people of Nebraska, maintain the continuity of education of students, maintain the continuity of services of the Nebraska Department of Education, and support the wellbeing of the staff of the Nebraska Department of Education;

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education further directs the Commissioner, under the authority of the rules and regulations administered by this Board, to facilitate broad flexibility for the operation of schools while asking schools to be cognizant of their students, families, and staff most in need of equitable supports; to support the use of continuity of learning plans as the approach to granting authority for schools to manage the needs of their schools and local communities; and to continue working with the Governor and other state and national leaders to provide broad flexibility under the Governor's emergency powers in the administration of statutes pertaining to the operation of schools during and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education encourages creative solutions to the complex problems faced by our state, communities, schools, educators, administrators, school boards, clients, and citizens;

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education grants the Commissioner the authority to submit emergency waivers to the federal government and apply for federal grants whenever Nebraska is eligible to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people of Nebraska;

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education grants the Commissioner the authority to manage the office environments of the Nebraska Department of Education in the safest manner while maintaining a continuity of operations for essential functions, including flexibility of staff leave and work environments; further, the State Board of Education supports the Commissioner in the delegation of duties to agency leadership and staff within the Nebraska Department of Education consistent with emergency needs; and

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education recognizes the intentional and purposeful work of the staff of the Nebraska Department of Education through the COVID-19 pandemic and recognizes the additional demands on their personal time and efforts and the unknown demands forthcoming.

Signed on behalf of the Nebraska State Board of Education, this 3rd day of April 2020.

Maureen Nickels, President

Patsy Koch Johns, Vice President