



1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Building 6 • Charleston, WV 25305  
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March 22, 2020

Dear County Superintendents,

As we move into week two of this Coronavirus outbreak, the West Virginia Department of Education is working to best support our counties to meet the needs of our children. I have said that priority one must be to feed and care for our children.

I have been in constant communication with you, and members of the Department have had ongoing phone calls with county-level leadership. The guidance that we have provided has been devised based on these discussions and from the numerous surveys we have sent to you and your staff. These surveys allow us to hear directly from those on the front lines of food distribution and student services so that we can determine how best to assist local-level needs with available state and national resources.

Many of you are requesting additional guidance on how best to serve the children in your county with the staff you have available.

Several superintendents have said they do not have the person-power or resources to provide food service. We have to consider distribution that is not reliant on school employees solely. I have reached out to our agency partners including the West Virginia National Guard, and the West Virginia Division of Tourism as well as private food-service businesses. Their responses have been swift and immediate allowing us to tap into additional volunteers, and food vendors to support the feeding of our children.

Starting this week, it is my recommendation that all counties move to a multi-day model for food distribution that also consolidates distribution sites. You do not need to have employees in your schools unless they are volunteering to pack and to deliver food, nor do you need to have food operations at every school. Food for multiple days can be delivered on one day.

This will allow you to reduce the number of individuals in your schools and to focus on volunteers at central locations to pack and deliver food. It is not necessary to require staff to report to your schools to support this effort. This type of production does not have to be confined to kitchens; spread assembly lines out to place workers at safe distances. Districts may need to consider

whether delivery is still a viable option and may need to consider distribution sites as an option for pick-up only.

Every employee can contribute, even at home. We have engaged many volunteers throughout the state who are ready to step in to support these efforts. Additionally, the Department has several volunteers branching out across the state to provide additional assistance. Use these volunteers to assist your staff members with food preparation.

We also are in the process of providing you with additional guidance for student engagement. For those who can continue with distance learning resources, please do so. For those whose plan also includes the use of paper and pencil packets sent to children's homes, we strongly advise that you do not expect that work to be returned to teachers for grades. At this point in the process, our goal should be to maintain engagement with our children, and to assist in keeping their skills sharp.

At this point, let me be clear: Do not ask staff to be present in schools unless they are volunteering for meal preparation and distribution. Move to a multi-day supply to be available one-or-two days a week. Use community volunteers and work with private vendors to help with food and supply preparation. Be safe and employ social distancing and rigorous cleaning and sanitizing protocols.

In closing, we are all in this together. In partnership with the West Virginia National Guard, private businesses, our parks and resorts, and our community volunteers our school employees can play an essential role helping to ensure that West Virginia families don't face a hunger crisis on the back of this pandemic crisis. As leaders in your districts, I'm asking you to manage this effort and make sure there is at least one caring adult to connect with every child in your county.

In the next several days, I hope to have more information about the duration of our school closure to allow you to better assess your plans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'WCB', written in a cursive style.

W. Clayton Burch  
State Superintendent of Schools