



Los Angeles County schools chief recommends campus closures through the end of the academic year due to COVID-19

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Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo on April 1 announced her recommendation that school campuses remain physically closed through the end of the academic year.

Duardo's recommendation aligns with messages by Gov. Gavin Newsom and State Superintendent Tony Thurmond that while campuses may be closed, school is in session and learning will continue.

"Our public health leaders have made it clear that the peak of this pandemic is yet to come. As social distancing practices remain vital, the safety of students and staff must continue to be our top priority," Duardo said. "Deciding now to keep campuses closed for the remainder of the school year allows our education community to focus on accelerating learning in a remote environment and finding new ways to engage and connect with students."

Duardo's recommendation was made after consulting with the county's 80 district superintendents, other county superintendents and state education representatives. Moving forward, the Los Angeles County Office of Education will continue to spearhead the regional effort to identify solutions and supports, strengthening the work already underway to provide distance learning and meals to the county's two million preschool through 12th-grade students.

"We applaud the Governor and State Superintendent for their leadership in addressing key issues, such as a comprehensive labor-management agreement and a partnership with Google to improve connectivity and reduce the digital divide," Duardo said. "These are the types of solutions that will make all the difference in our ability to create remote learning environments where teaching and learning can thrive."

LACOE will bring together educators from across the county to develop a comprehensive plan to address a range of issues in addition to distance learning, including high school graduation, grading, special education, reopening of schools and summer school offerings. In addition, LACOE is leading an effort to identify external sources of funding and partnerships to provide devices, connectivity and other materials schools need to support student learning.

"While not ideal, the distance learning environment is our new reality. Distance learning will look different from district to district and school to school. We must be patient with our students, staff and parents as we adjust to this new learning experience. However, I feel confident that each day the remote learning experience is improving and we can build on our existing expertise and harness the power of partnerships and collaboration to ensure our young people continue to learn and grow," Duardo said. "Together, we will rise to this challenge."

As part of its efforts, LACOE is working with partner agencies to provide childcare for health care workers, first responders and other essential workers using existing early childhood education facilities. Additional information about these centers will be released in the coming days.

For the remainder of the school year, only school and district personnel who perform essential functions — such as feeding children, providing childcare or ensuring business continuity — are required to come to work using Los Angeles County's guidelines outlined in its "Safer at Home" Public Health Order.

Extending a school closure is a local decision that will be made by each individual school district. When schools reopen, LACOE will provide guidance regarding required school maintenance and best ways to support staff, students and families with their return.

Schools operated by LACOE will remain physically closed while ensuring continued learning for students. They include the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, International Polytechnic High School, county community schools and Juvenile Court Schools located at the juvenile halls and camps.