

NEWS ALERT



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

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M-DCPS Provides Important Updates Regarding Distance Learning and School System Operations

Late this afternoon, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) announced that all K-12 schools and career and technical center campuses are to remain closed through April 15. All state-required assessments have been cancelled through the remainder of the school year. All remaining assessments for school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and K-12 assessments are cancelled. Requirements for graduation and promotion, and final course grades will be evaluated as though those assessments which were cancelled did not exist. In addition, school performance grades will not be calculated for the 2019-2020 academic year.

The FLDOE also advised that unspent categorical funds, funds that are allocated for a specific purpose, may be redirected to provide students with digital devices and Internet service.

“We welcome the decisions announced today specific to accountability and statewide assessments, and commend the Governor and Commissioner for providing school districts greater flexibility in the use of funding to address critical needs,” said Schools Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho. “This latitude will assist districts in their efforts to successfully navigate this new educational reality.”

Instructional Delivery

Since news of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak first surfaced, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has prepared for distance learning.

Since Friday, March 13th, M-DCPS has deployed more than 50,000 devices to students for distance learning use. Devices will continue to be made available for pick-up at school sites through end of day Wednesday, March 18 for students who need them.

Day one of distance learning on Monday, March 16th at M-DCPS led to impressive results, with approximately 16,600 teachers receiving professional development via webinar, and hundreds of thousands of students logging in across a wide array of online educational applications.

The teacher-student connection has not been lost outside of the classroom. There were over 86,000 views and more than 25,000 student-teacher replies on Edmodo, one of the many digital platforms available for teachers to connect directly with students and parents/guardians.

The Distance Learning Help Desk (305-995-HELP) assisted 800 students, parents, and teachers on Monday alone.

(more)

Important Updates/ Add one

The hotline took additional calls today and remains open daily from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. until Friday, March 20th.

Parent/Guardian engagement is critically important to the success of distance learning. Students and parents may access the M-DCPS comprehensive Instructional Continuity Plan (ICP) by logging onto <http://icp.dadeschools.net/>. As part of the established plan, the District has also adapted content to be accessible for students with special needs and English Language Learners. Students can access their applications via the Student Portal.

To assist in Internet connectivity, Comcast continues to offer free WiFi via Xfinity hotspots where Xfinity service is available for 60 days. This is in addition to the Internet Essentials Program, normally \$9.95 per month, that will provide an in-home modem and 60 days of free service for eligible low-income M-DCPS families.

Participation in this program is strongly recommended for those in need. More information about the free Internet service can be found at <http://distancelearning.dadeschools.net/>. Access to free WiFi connections via hotspots should be limited to educational use or other essential health and safety functions. Comcast has also agreed to provide flexibility on late fees and payment options. Those struggling to pay for internet service should contact 1-800-Comcast.

Sanitization Efforts

Teams of 20 to 30 custodians, supervised by master custodians have been sanitizing schools since early Monday morning. The teams have sanitized more than 20 schools so far, using hospital-grade germicides to clean floors, classrooms, restrooms, cafeterias, gyms, all common areas and contact points; wiping and mopping down surfaces and fogging where needed. Maintenance personnel is also addressing air quality control by cleaning air conditioning filters and coils. The crews will be following contagious disease protocols which include personal protective gear and washing everything they use.

Cancellation of March School Board Meeting

Pursuant to Board Policy 0165, Public Meetings, the regular School Board meeting scheduled for March 18, 2020, has been cancelled as a result of the current closure of schools consistent with Governor Ron DeSantis' declared State of Emergency due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Following the guidance of the Florida Department of Health, which suggests “the cancellation of gatherings greater than 10 people...” to protect against the spread of COVID-19, M-DCPS is taking all precautions to ensure the safety of our workforce and our community.

This cancellation is reflected on the District's master calendar, which can be viewed at <http://meetings.dadeschools.net/>. A replacement date for the statutorily required Board meeting shall be appropriately noticed.

M-DCPS Employee Information

To further limit convenings of more than 10 people, beginning Wednesday, employees assigned to the School Board Administration Building Complex have been advised to work remotely, unless specifically designated by their worksite administrator.

(more)

Important Updates / add two

Employees, retirees, and their dependents will have uninterrupted access to healthcare. Insurance coverage will continue even if the ability to remit premium is delayed. Once normal operations resume, arrangements will be made to collect outstanding premium.

Employees enrolled in a District health plan will incur no out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing, if it is medically necessary.

The CDC has recently advised of elevated travel advisory levels to several areas and has issued specific guidance related to cruise ship travel. The District strongly recommends employees refrain from traveling to areas currently at Level 3 or Level 2, as well as defer travel via cruise ship. If employees choose to travel against these advisories, absences will be charged in accordance with established payroll procedures.

Meal Distribution for Students

The District will continue to provide free “grab-and-go” breakfasts and lunches to students and their families, in external areas of school sites between 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. this week. M-DCPS food service personnel distributed more than 50,000 hot to-go meals in the first two days of school closures, demonstrating the great level of need in our community.

M-DCPS Support Lines:

- **District Emergency Operations hotline: 305-995-3000**
 - To answer questions from students, parents and other community members about school district-related coronavirus response efforts.
 - Hours of Operation: M – F from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

- **Instructional Learning Plan hotline: 305-995-HELP (4357)**
 - To support students, parents and teachers in engaging in distance learning.
 - Hours of Operation: M – F from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

- **Mental Health Services hotline: 305-995-7100**
 - To assist students and their families with mental health support..
 - Hours of Operation: M – F from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

- **M-DCPS Employee Assistance Program: 305-995-7111**
 - To assist with wellness support for employees.
 - Hours of Operation: M – F from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

M-DCPS Online Resources

- <http://covid19.dadeschools.net>
 - Provides continual updates on M-DCPS actions connected to the coronavirus outbreak.

- <http://distancelearning.dadeschools.net/>
 - Includes information on digital resources for educators and students.
 - Provides information on free Comcast internet as well as useful digital tools and tutorials.

(more)

Important Updates / add three

- <http://icp.dadeschools.net/>
 - Provides the M-DCPS framework for distance learning for pre-K-12 students.

The District will continue to monitor all developments in this evolving situation and will communicate via the links above, as well as through automated messaging, media announcements and social media.

For the most up-to-date information, please download the Dadeschools mobile app to your iPhone or Android device. Follow us on Twitter [@mdcps](#) and [@miamisup](#), on Instagram [@miamischools](#) and [@miamisup](#), and on Facebook at [MiamiSchools](#) and [AlbertoCarvalho](#)

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