

Dear MEA Members:

After direct consultation with the Maine Department of Education, the Maine Education Association would like to update our members with critical information about what to expect in the weeks ahead.

MEA knows there is a tremendous amount of concern among educators, but our Commissioner has been clear, she trusts educators, wants us to do our best, and take care of ourselves.

During these trying times, MEA understands you have many questions regarding your jobs and your students. Here is the most recent information MEA has confirmed with the Department of Education.

1. School Days/Attendance Waiver

The Commissioner's latest Priority Notice made clear- the Department of Education will liberally waive student days for the current school year saying: *"we will waive the minimum number of required school days and attendance requirements for this school year."* While we can expect the Department will develop a process for administration to report on the number of student days, the Department has been clear that it is prepared to waive student days as needed due to this crisis. MEA advocated for this measure and is pleased the Department understands this need.

2. Standardized Testing Suspended

Educators should expect all mandatory standardized testing will be suspended for the remainder of the school year. The Maine Department of Education expects formal notification from the US Department of Education any day, but MEA fully expects all mandated state testing will be waived. MEA worked with MDOE expressing this concern early on, and appreciates the Commissioner prioritizing necessities at this time, rather than testing.

3. Certification Timeline Extended

MEA is working with the Department of Education to allow for an extension for teacher certifications that were set to expire in 2020. The new deadline, upon agreement, would be some time in 2021. The Department is showing great flexibility and MEA hopes this will also apply to certification timelines.

4. Teacher Evaluations

MEA is recommending the PE/PG system in school districts should be suspended, until further notice. It is clear the key elements of the PE/PG system may be unworkable given the lack of classroom instruction in our schools. All elements should be on hold until schools resume normal operations. MEA will be working with MDOE to discuss this issue.

5. Pre-Service Teacher Requirements

MEA met virtually with our pre-service teachers to better understand the needs of these students. After that discussion, and conversations with the MDOE, the Department of Education has notified MEA it will waive strict adherence to student teaching requirements and accept recommendations

from approved Maine teacher preparation programs that modify or eliminate some of their student teaching requirements.

It will take us all working together to do our best for kids over the coming weeks and months. The Department of Education is providing great flexibility to our educators, and MEA appreciates the Commissioner's confidence, support and calls for optimism.