



March 13, 2020

The Honorable Governor Tony Evers
Office of the Governor
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers:

These are trying and stressful times for public employees working in Wisconsin's public schools. As you are well aware, educators are charged with developing the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of the students we serve every day. Most recently, it has become evident we are further charged with the health and safety of our students. In the event of mass school closings, the WEAC calls on the Office of the Governor and the Department of Public Instruction to consider the following issues and implement solutions that bring relief for both public employees and all citizens of Wisconsin:

Close all Schools Immediately. Keeping some schools open while many are closed communicates a mixed message to residents and jeopardizes the containment of the virus.

Keep the Union at the Table. WEAC is a key partner to the Department of Public Instruction and the Officer of the Governor on educational issues. We bring solutions to the table. WEAC leadership should be involved in deliberations and decision making as it relates to Wisconsin's Public Schools, particularly in this time of crisis.

Statewide Waiver of Instructional Hours. Keeping students and staff healthy and safe in a pandemic ought to be a State priority. E-learning plans some districts may attempt to implement vary in quality and have the potential to create access issues for all students, particularly those affected by poverty.

Pause the Educator Effectiveness System. Educator Effectiveness is highly dependent on student attendance. In the event of extended school closures, teachers will be unable to collect data related to their SLO through regular formative assessment methods designed in the fall of 2019. All 2019-20 SLO data will be invalid due to an interruption of instruction.

ESSA. Adjust or extend the testing window to accommodate as many students as possible. Work with the US Department of Education to implement a one-year waiver of the requirement to identify a school for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.

Extensions for IEPs. The Department of Public Instruction should work with the US Department of Education to extend all Individual Education Plan expiration dates for students with special needs. The extension deadline should be no less than twice the amount of time schools are closed, establishing time for students to readjust.

Ron Martin, President
Bob Baxter, Executive Director



Economic Justice for Students and Families. Free testing for all students and families; assure paid time off for parents and caregivers; create a food delivery system for students isolated or quarantined who currently qualify for free or reduced lunch; provide a safe space for homeless youth.

Paid Time off for all Employees. Public school employees are at the first line of defense putting their own health at risk working to ensure the success of their students. All levers should be considered, including extending unemployment compensation to public employees and tapping into district fund balances.

Implement Enhanced Cleaning of Schools. In consultation with school custodial staff, CDC recommendations for enhanced cleaning and disinfection should be executed in every public school house in Wisconsin.

Nurses in Schools. Implement the recommendation of The American Academy of Pediatrics. There should be a full-time nurse in every Wisconsin Public School.

Adapt Requirements for Preservice Educators. Create a reasonable pathway for teacher candidates to complete their student teaching requirement in a way that would allow them to graduate on time, apply for and accept teaching positions in the fall. Work with higher ed programs for an extension and/or waiver of edTPA requirements.

Wisconsin has a history for excellence and high standards as it relates to its public schools, a direct result of the quality of its workforce. As key decisions are made by local and state officials, it is imperative that the voice of those with direct influence in school houses is heard and that bold strategies to address issues related to the current State of Emergency are implemented. As much as we are interested in discussing these points with you, we are equally interested in taking courageous action to protect the well-being of Wisconsin's residents.

Sincerely,


Ronald Duff Martin
WEAC President


Robert Baxter
WEAC Executive Director