



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 12, 2021  
**TO:** Michigan Educators  
**FROM:** Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., State Superintendent  
**SUBJECT:** *Learning Beyond COVID-19: A Vision for Thriving in Public Education*  
MEMO #COVID-19-176

A few months ago, I shared publicly that, though we all wanted a return to pre-pandemic normalcy, our focus—given our interest in improvement of Michigan public education for our children as noted in the new state strategic education plan—should instead be a pivot to a new, better normal.

The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have co-authored *Learning Beyond COVID-19: A Vision for Thriving in Public Education*, which you may find [here](#). This is the first of several efforts of organizations and associations to re-imagine public education in the pandemic that we will share with you in the coming months.

This thoughtful report offers suggestions in five broad areas: assessing student well-being and academic level, addressing the needs of underserved children, providing students with additional learning time, providing educators and support staff with professional development, and centering on equity and excellence.

The report is a quick and worthwhile read, which you can explore on your own. Apart from its reflections on better assessing children's needs, better serving the underserved, better preparing staff, and leading in a more equitable way, the report makes the case for more time for our children:

"Given the pandemic, we should create opportunities for increasing the time students spend engaged in guided learning with a qualified professional, particularly for our most vulnerable students. Such opportunities include extending the school day, extending the school year, restructuring the school day or providing other tutoring and enrichment opportunities with school district employees and retired or aspiring educators.

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Labor-management collaborations should find ways to close opportunity gaps by increasing learning time for students while negotiating labor standards in collective bargaining agreements.”

Ultimately, the rubber hits the road where children are educated: primarily in local education agencies (LEAs), both traditional public school districts and public school academies, across the state. The COVID-19 pandemic; the resultant disruption to education over the last 13 months; the narrowing of the digital divide; the increased understanding in the general population of the importance of social and emotional learning, children’s mental health, and in-person instruction; and the enormous appropriation of federal education funds have all combined to make this an extraordinary challenge—and opportunity—for us collectively and you in your schools and districts to re-think how we serve children. It is in this spirit that we share this report—and other resources—in the coming months.

Thank you for your attention to this communication.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors