



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Ensuring a bright future for every child

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NEWS RELEASE

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School Districts Finalizing Plans for Start of New School Year

JACKSON, Miss. — All Mississippi school districts will finalize plans for the start of the new school year by July 31.

State law requires Mississippi schools to operate 180 days each school year, with the school year ending by June 30. By law, school districts are in charge of setting their school calendars, including the first and last day of school.

The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) in June gave school districts the flexibility to implement one of three options for operating schools in 2020-21: traditional, virtual or a hybrid of in-person and distance learning. In July, the SBE established a policy for taking attendance virtually.

"The State Board of Education is sensitive to the fact that local school districts have to contend with tough decisions about how to operate school safely this year," said Dr. Jason Dean, SBE chair. "Local school boards are the only ones with the legal authority to set the date for starting school. There is no authority given to the State Board of Education to direct school opening plans."

Based on the March 14, 2020 [State of Emergency Proclamation](#), the governor has the power to temporarily suspend or modify laws, rules and policies to cope with the COVID-19 outbreak. The governor also has the power to declare school start dates by Executive Order.

The [Mississippi Department of Education \(MDE\) has developed guidance, considerations and best practices](#) for Mississippi districts for operating school in the 2020-21 school year. It has been developed with input from school and district leaders, mental health and health professionals, teachers, parents, and students. The information continues to be updated as further research, data and resources become available.

Districts must post school opening plans on their website and report plans to the MDE by July 31, 2020. Most school districts that have [announced plans for school reopening](#) include an option for parents to opt-in to distance learning. Questions about specific scheduling plans and policies should be directed to local school districts.



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MDE Guidance for the 2020-21 School Year: www.mdek12.org/guidance2020-21

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