MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
       Instructional Leaders

FROM: David M. Mathis, Ed.D
       Deputy Superintendent, Division of College and Career Readiness

DATE: April 13, 2020

RE: Emergency Distance Learning Guidance Revisions

The purpose of this memo is to provide recommendations on the amount of instructional minutes delivered and guidance on the introduction of new instructional material pursuant to distance learning plans currently implemented due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Because distance learning is now required to be implemented much longer than anticipated, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) reviewed the original guidance on the number of instructional minutes per day and the introduction of new instructional material during the school closure.

Time assigned to instructional tasks should be developmentally appropriate. It is difficult to equate time spent at home on school activities with the time the student would have spent at school. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that daily routine of families has changed.

Considering the differences in how districts are able to deliver instruction during the closure either through eLearning, pencil/paper packets, or a blended approach, the SCDE is recommending the instructional minutes listed below for each grade level as a guide. The suggested instructional periods include time needed for processing, practice, reading, research, and any other actions that may support the learning process. The guide includes suggested minimum and maximum minutes for instructional time and recommended lengths of sustained attention.
As educators work to implement these recommendations, consideration should be given to flexibility, empathy, and understanding for all students to ensure that they continue to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Additionally, instructional planning decisions should include:

- Students who have limited access to data, internet, or a device;
- Students who are home alone while adults are working;
- Students who are caretakers for siblings or ill family members;
- Students who work to help support their family;
- Students who speak a language other than English and have language needs;
- Students whose parents speak a language other than English and cannot assist with homework;
- Students who have special education needs (e.g., children with an IEP);
- Students who are coping with the illness or loss of a family member;
- Students who are struggling with anxiety or depression;
- Staff who are working remotely and simultaneously planning and delivering remote instruction while also providing care for their families and, in many cases, their own children; and
- Breaks between assignments that a student may need.

A priority should be to address essential standards that serve as introduction to the next level of coursework for every student.

**Introduction of New Instructional Material**

Due to the extended time period of remote learning during the current COVID-19 pandemic, teachers may introduce new material to students. Careful consideration should be given to the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Recommended Length of Sustained Attention</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PreK</td>
<td>20 minutes/day</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>3–5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>30 minutes/day</td>
<td>90 minutes/day</td>
<td>3–5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>45 minutes/day</td>
<td>90 minutes/day</td>
<td>5–10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>120 minutes/day</td>
<td>10–15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–8</td>
<td>Class: 15 minutes/day</td>
<td>Class: 30 minutes/day</td>
<td>1 subject area or class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 90 minutes/day</td>
<td>Total: 180 minutes/day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>Class: 20 minutes/day</td>
<td>Class: 45 minutes/day</td>
<td>1 subject area or class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 120 minutes/day</td>
<td>Total: 270 minutes/day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
appropriateness of the instructional material, the delivery of content and concepts, and the information that facilitates successful transition into the next academic year.

**Special Education Services**
Special education teachers and related service providers need to determine what practical and reasonable services, supports, accommodations, and/or modifications any student with an Individual Education Program (IEP) requires to have equitable access during the closure. In consultation with parents, the special education services and supports should assist the student in advancing appropriately toward attaining the student’s annual goals. Students should be involved in the instruction that is being provided to all students, as appropriate. Additional resources and information about special education during school closures can be found [here](#).

**Foreign Exchange Students**
During the school closure, foreign exchange students may have been required to return to their home country. They should not be withdrawn from school, but given the opportunity to stay connected to their teachers and complete their work.

**Resources**
In an effort to assist schools and districts with the implementation of the above referenced instructional guidance, the SCDE has developed a multitude of resources that can be utilized by educators, parents, and students.

SCRemoteLearning.com
The SCDE launched [SCRemoteLearning.com](#), a website offering digital teaching and learning resources for teachers, parents, and students during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

**VirtualSC Presents eLearning SC 2020, an Online Professional Learning Opportunity**
VirtualSC will be hosting a 2-hour virtual professional learning experience designed to give teachers a space to discuss the transition to digital learning. VirtualSC’s veteran online teachers and the Instructional Support Staff at VirtualSC will be facilitating the discussion.

**Tuesday, April 21, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.**
- Webinar: Introducing New Content in Digital Format
- Round Table Discussion: Assessing Digital Learning, Engaging Digital Learners, Supporting Struggling Learners from Afar

To register for the session, complete the form at [https://bit.ly/2JPpjlH](https://bit.ly/2JPpjlH) by **April 19th**. Teachers that register will receive the webinar login information via email prior to the session.

Contact: Bradley Mitchell: Director, Office of VirtualSC [bmitchell@ed.sc.gov](mailto:bmitchell@ed.sc.gov)
Reminder Course Completion for Graduating Seniors:

Guidance Relating to Seniors Only:
All students have been impacted by COVID-19 related school closures; every effort is being made to ensure that high school seniors have the opportunity and adequate period of time to earn the necessary credits for on-time graduation. The period of time for course completion, demonstration of mastery, and course remediation must be finalized by May 15th. All grades for seniors should be entered into PowerSchool by May 22nd.

Unless further guidance is provided, deadlines for all other students should follow the current calendar of the district.

For a student whose eligibility under special education terminates due to graduation with a regular diploma, or due to exceeding the age of eligibility, the district must provide the student with a summary of the student’s academic achievement and functional performance (SOP), which includes recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his/her postsecondary goals (§Sec. 300.305(e)(3)). If a student is failing (prior to the school closure), he/she would be given the same opportunity provided to all similarly-situated students (guidance will be coming out soon in this area). If the student will be able to graduate, an SOP must be provided. If the student will not meet graduation requirements even with the additional options provided in the forthcoming guidance, the IEP team would conduct the annual review, when appropriate, and continue providing services as per the IEP. The IEP team does not need to meet to provide the SOP to the student, but a conference should be scheduled with the teacher and student to go over the SOP and to answer any questions.

If I could offer any assistance, please contact me through the Emergency Distance Learning mailbox at edl@ed.sc.gov.