



March 19, 2020

Dear Cyber Charter Chief School Administrator:

On March 15, we communicated with each of you to relay important updates; underscore the Governor's directive that **all public schools are closed** (an order that now extends to private schools); and outline protocols for communicating with the Department (PDE) as we navigate an extraordinary public health challenge.

We write today to follow up on our commitment to provide regular updates given our responsibility as the statewide authorizer of public cyber charter schools.

Since Monday, several cyber charter schools have indicated through social media, parent communications, and other means that they have reopened, or intend to reopen, instructional programming. In certain cases, an "approval from the Department" has been referenced in these plans. **To be clear, under the current order from the Governor, no school in Pennsylvania is permitted or authorized to reopen.** Your school, like all other public schools, may plan for and pursue continuity of education; however, PDE does not approve local continuity of education plans. Rather, PDE:

- 1) Articulates federal and state requirements that underly any continuity of education planning;
- 2) Ensures that all students maintain equitable access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), consistent with our role as the state education agency under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- 3) Reiterates the utmost importance of social distancing in the provision of any such programming; and
- 4) Facilitates technical assistance, as appropriate. On this point, and to follow on our commitment from the March 15 communication, cyber charter schools may access continuity of education planning technical assistance via the Bucks County Intermediate Unit; that support will be available beginning Tuesday, March 24. The specific point of contact for cyber charter schools will be:

Andrew Coonradt, Ed.D.
Teaching and Learning Specialist
Bucks County Intermediate Unit
aconradt@bucksiu.org

We understand the rapidly evolving pandemic may make it impossible to implement appropriate continuity of education plans. Accordingly, should your school elect to **not provide** any

educational services to the general student population during the pandemic, there will be no adverse actions by PDE related to continuity of education.

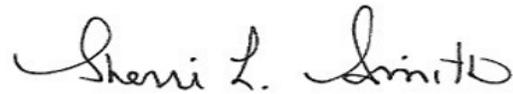
If your school elects to provide continuity of education, we do ask that you take care to communicate accurately around any such plans. Our goal during this unprecedented event has been to implement a core recommendation of public health experts—an aggressive, clear, and consistent social distancing policy. Indicating that your school is “open” or that closure will cease on a timeline other than the one articulated by the Administration undermines these critical efforts. Let us be clear: **no school in the Commonwealth is authorized to reopen at this time.**

This is a difficult time for our public schools, students, and families. We ask for your continued support in the days ahead.

Sincerely,



Adam Schott
Special Assistant to the Secretary
adschott@pa.gov



Sherri Smith
Advisor to the Deputy Secretary
ssherri@pa.gov