



# FANNIN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

SUPERINTENDENT  
Dr. Michael Gwatney

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April 3, 2020

Dear FCSS Community:

The purpose of this letter is to update you on a change to the information stated in my March 27 letter to the community regarding the duration of our district's closure due to COVID-19. Per an Executive Order issued by Governor Kemp on April 1 (attached), **the FCSS will remain closed through the remainder of this school year.** Likewise, all after-school activities are cancelled; this also applies to all clubs and sports.

Now that the final parameters of this year's school calendar are known, many details must be sorted out at all levels. This announcement reframes the recent "what if" questions about upcoming events, including: pre-k through high school registrations for the upcoming school year, annual ceremonies and celebrations, the prom, and senior graduation. Your child's school will communicate specific information about how these traditional events are affected as soon as possible.

My heart goes out to all students, faculty and staff, and family members. Friday, March 13, has become – unknowingly to all at the time – the last traditional day of the 2019-2020 school year. This is a difficult realization for our students and their families, as well as our retiring faculty and staff members from all schools. Their sadness is real, and I urge you to keep these individuals in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

As you may know, I am close to the Class of 2020. I am a biological father to one of them, but I feel like a parent to them all. I watched the Class of 2020 come in to this world on the heels of 9/11. I was with them (as their Director of Technology) on the first day school in 2007, and I am now watching them become our newest graduates while locked down in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. I have seen tears and listened to words spoken from saddened hearts of the students and their parents. There is much disappointment over things beyond anyone's control. Once again, I urge you to keep the Class of 2020, as well as their families, in your thoughts and prayers.

I said last week that things are not the same as they were just a short time ago. Our reality was turned upside down after March 13. Within a couple of weeks, school was redefined, and everyone has been struggling to find a new routine. Unfortunately, as the virus spreads, our routines will continue to change, and the struggle will increase for the duration of this crisis. Fortunately, we have been given grace by the Georgia Department of Education. Earlier this week, they issued new guidance regarding academic expectations for the remainder of this school year.

Members of my leadership team and I have considered these guidelines and modified many of our local protocols. Our goal is to make academic expectations more realistic with respect to the many difficulties – including physical and mental health, increased financial burdens, and a reduction in overall available resources – being faced by our entire community.

I have spoken with all principals and assistant principals during the past two days, and the grace given to our district has been given to our schools. In turn, the school leadership is sharing this grace with our teachers, and they will extend it to our students. To summarize it, no student's grade shall be adversely affected beyond what s/he had earned on March 13; however, all work completed since March 13 will be applied to raise a child's grade as much as possible.

Teachers will continue to teach and communicate with their students each day. Our goal, of course, remains to provide learning opportunities for students, and nobody is suggesting that any standards be lowered. The grace that is being extended throughout our system is less about today, though; instead, it is intended to prepare for what may happen in Fannin County very soon.

The immediate seriousness of this situation cannot be underestimated. Depending on the course of this virus, it is not unreasonable to expect that Georgia will look like Italy or New York City within a couple of weeks. If this should occur, the grace that is being afforded today will allow the focus of our teachers to shift away from being a provider of instruction to more of a deliverer of love and hope. No matter what may happen in our community, the faculty and staff will remain a source of support for your child(ren).

Each member of the Board of Education and I, as well as the entire faculty and staff of the Fannin County School System, remain committed to our students and this community. Our personnel have risen to the challenge and shined over the last couple of weeks. Every employee has proven to be an important part of delivering essential services to our community. Even with the Governor's current Executive Order mandating a statewide "shelter in place" effective today (also attached), we will continue to work hard and to meet the needs of our students. All of the services that are currently provided – academic, support, meals, etc. – will continue forward at this time; however, please understand that if our resources diminish, our capacity will be lowered. This could force us to reduce some services, but each of us who are able will remain committed to supporting the children of Fannin County to the greatest extent humanly possible.

Moving forward, please protect your health, both physically and mentally. For physical health, follow the recommendations of the medical community. It is essential to keep your distance from others. You must treat each person you encounter as if s/he has the virus. Social distancing and frequent handwashing, as well as not touching your face, nose, mouth, and eyes with unwashed hands, are essential practices. In addition, you must cover your coughs and sneezes.

For mental health, keep the ideals of faith, hope, and love at the forefront. It is good to think about the future, but do not worry too much about it. Instead, focus on today – "right here and right now." You are not alone, and as you shelter in place, I encourage you to focus on those around you; enjoy their company, and let them know that you love them. Grace and kindness always go a long way in life, especially now.

As always, reach out to your child's school or my office; we will do what we can to help. My prayers continue for you and your family.

Sincerely,



Michael Gwatney, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Attachments: 1) Executive Order 04.01.20.01 regarding the closure of schools; and  
2) Executive Order 04.02.20.01 regarding the statewide "shelter in place."



# THE STATE OF GEORGIA

## EXECUTIVE ORDER

### BY THE GOVERNOR:

#### EXTENDED SCHOOL CLOSURES TO STOP SPREAD OF COVID-19

- WHEREAS:** On March 14, 2020, due to the impact of COVID-19 on the State of Georgia, I issued Executive Order 03.14.20.01, declaring a Public Health State of Emergency in Georgia; and
- WHEREAS:** The Georgia General Assembly concurred with Executive Order 03.14.20.01 by joint resolution on March 16, 2020; and
- WHEREAS:** Executive Order 03.16.20.01 closed all public elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools in Georgia through Tuesday, March 31, 2020; and
- WHEREAS:** The Georgia Department of Public Health has determined that COVID-19 is spreading through Georgia communities; and
- WHEREAS:** The number of COVID-19 cases in Georgia continues to rise; and
- WHEREAS:** Further action is necessary to protect the health and safety of the population of Georgia, slow the spread of COVID-19, reduce the number of people who will become infected, and avoid unnecessary strain on Georgia's healthcare system; and
- WHEREAS:** During a state of emergency, Georgia law vests the Governor with powers and duties as may be deemed necessary to promote and secure the safety and protection of the civilian population; and
- WHEREAS:** Code Section 38-3-51(d)(1) vests the Governor with the power to suspend any regulatory statute prescribing the procedures for conduct of state business, or the orders, rules, or regulations of any state agency, if strict compliance with any statute, order, rule, or regulation would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with the emergency or disaster; and
- WHEREAS:** In consultation with the Governor's Coronavirus Task Force and local, state, and federal education, health and emergency preparedness officials, I have determined that an extended closure of

all elementary, secondary, and post-secondary public schools in Georgia is a necessary and appropriate action to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Georgia's residents and visitors to help control the spread of COVID-19 throughout this State.

**NOW, THEREFORE, PURSUANT TO CODE SECTION 38-3-51, AND THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME AS GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA, IT IS HEREBY**

**ORDERED:** That the school closures mandated by Executive Order 03.26.20.02 are hereby extended by the terms included in this Order.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That all public elementary and secondary schools shall remain closed through the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That all post-secondary public schools shall remain closed for instruction to graduate and undergraduate students through the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That actions not addressed by this Order related to the health, safety, and welfare of the students, faculty, and staff of the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia may be determined by the Chancellor of the University System of Georgia and the Commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia for their respective post-secondary education systems.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That for the purposes of online learning, each local school district may establish a final day of classes pursuant to each district's authority conveyed by Code Section 20-2-49 *et seq.*

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That this Order shall not prevent remote learning or online programs developed for students by the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia, the Georgia Board of Education, or any local school district.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That this Order shall not prevent faculty or staff of any system, school district, or school from being asked to work or return to their respective campuses as needed to maintain essential services.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:**

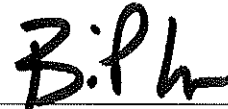
That the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Georgia Department of Education implement measures providing for the health, nutrition, safety, educational needs, and well-being of students during this mandated school closure period.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:**

That if one or more of the provisions contained in this Order shall be held to be invalid, in violation of the Georgia Constitution, in violation of Georgia law, or unenforceable in any respect, such invalidity, violation, or unenforceability shall not affect any other provisions of this Order, but, in such case, this Order shall be construed as if such invalid, illegal, or unenforceable provision had never been contained within the Order.

This 1<sup>st</sup> day of April 2020.



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GOVERNOR



# THE STATE OF GEORGIA

## EXECUTIVE ORDER

### BY THE GOVERNOR:

#### EXECUTIVE ORDER TO ENSURE A SAFE & HEALTHY GEORGIA

- WHEREAS:** On March 14, 2020, due to the impact of COVID-19 on the State of Georgia, I issued Executive Order No. 03.14.20.01, declaring a Public Health State of Emergency in Georgia; and
- WHEREAS:** The Georgia General Assembly concurred with Executive Order 03.14.20.01 by joint resolution on March 16, 2020; and
- WHEREAS:** The number of COVID-19 cases in Georgia continues to rise; and
- WHEREAS:** The Georgia Department of Public Health has determined that COVID-19 is spreading throughout communities, requiring the implementation of certain restrictions to limit the spread; and
- WHEREAS:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has determined that older adults, people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions, and certain other people groups may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19; and
- WHEREAS:** Code Section 38-3-51(c)(4) vests the Governor with the power to perform and exercise such other functions, powers, and duties as may be deemed necessary to promote and secure the safety and protection of the civilian population; and
- WHEREAS:** Code Section 38-3-51(d)(1) vests the Governor with the power to suspend any regulatory statute prescribing the procedures for conduct of state business, or the orders, rules, or regulations of any state agency if strict compliance with any statute, order, rule, or regulation would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with the emergency or disaster; and
- WHEREAS:** Code Sections 31-2A-4 and 31-12-4 vests the Department of Public Health with the power to segregate and isolate certain individuals with certain communicable diseases or conditions when said

individuals' exposure to the general population is likely to endanger the health of others; and

**WHEREAS:** In consultation with the Governor's Coronavirus Task Force and health and emergency preparedness officials, I have determined that the following temporary actions are necessary and appropriate to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Georgia's residents and visitors.

**NOW, THEREFORE, PURSUANT TO AFOREMENTIONED GEORGIA LAW AND THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME AS GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA, IT IS HEREBY**

**ORDERED:** All residents and visitors of the State of Georgia shall practice social distancing and sanitation in accordance with this Order and guidelines published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** No business, establishment, corporation, non-profit corporation, organization, or county or municipal government shall allow more than ten (10) persons to be gathered at a single location if such gathering requires persons to stand or to be seated within six (6) feet of any other person. This provision shall not apply to cohabitating persons outside of their homes, family units or roommates residing together in private homes, or entities defined as "Critical Infrastructure" by this Order.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That as used in this Order, the term "single location" shall be interpreted to mean a space where all persons gathered cannot maintain at least six (6) feet of distance between themselves and any other person. The term "single location" shall not include private residences.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That all residents and visitors of the State of Georgia are required to shelter in place within their homes or places of residence, meaning remaining in their place of residence and taking every possible precaution to limit social interaction to prevent the spread or infection of COVID-19 to themselves or any other person, unless they are:

1. Conducting or participating in Essential Services;

2. Performing Necessary Travel;
3. Are engaged in the performance of, or travel to and from, the performance of Minimum Basic Operations for a business, establishment, corporation, non-profit corporation, or organization not classified as Critical Infrastructure; or
4. Are part of the workforce for Critical Infrastructure and are actively engaged in the performance of, or travel to and from, their respective employment.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That Essential Services permitted pursuant to the provisions of this Order are limited to the following:

1. Obtaining necessary supplies and services for family or household members, such as food and supplies for household consumption and use, medical supplies or medication, supplies and equipment needed to work from home, and products needed to maintain safety, sanitation, and essential maintenance of the home or residence. Preference should be given to online ordering, home delivery, and curbside pick-up services wherever possible as opposed to in-store shopping.
2. Engaging in activities essential for the health and safety of family or household members, such as seeking medical, behavioral health, or emergency services.
3. Engaging in outdoor exercise activities so long as a minimum distance of six (6) feet is maintained during such activities between all persons who are not occupants of the same household or residence.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That Necessary Travel permitted under this Order is limited to such travel as is required to conduct or participate in Essential Services, Minimum Basic Operations, or Critical Infrastructure as defined by this Order.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That Minimum Basic Operations are limited to:

1. The minimum necessary activities to maintain the value of a business, establishment, corporation, non-profit corporation, or organization, provide services, manage inventory, ensure security, process payroll and employee benefits, or for related functions. Such minimum necessary activities include remaining open to the public subject to the restrictions of this Order.



2. The minimum necessary activities to facilitate employees or volunteers being able to work remotely from their residences or members or patrons being able to participate remotely from their residences.
3. Instances where employees are working outdoors without regular contact with other persons, such as delivery services, contractors, landscape businesses, and agricultural industry services.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:**

That all businesses, establishments, corporations, non-profit corporations, or organizations that are *not* Critical Infrastructure shall only engage in Minimum Basic Operations as defined in this Order during the effective dates of this Order. Such entities shall also implement measures which mitigate the exposure and spread of COVID-19 among its workforce. Such measures shall include the following:

1. Screening and evaluating workers who exhibit signs of illness, such as a fever over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, or shortness of breath;
2. Requiring workers who exhibit signs of illness to not report to work or to seek medical attention;
3. Enhancing sanitation of the workplace as appropriate;
4. Requiring hand washing or sanitation by workers at appropriate places within the business location;
5. Providing personal protective equipment as available and appropriate to the function and location of the worker within the business location;
6. Prohibiting gatherings of workers during working hours;
7. Permitting workers to take breaks and meals outside, in their office or personal workspace, or in such other areas where proper social distancing is attainable;
8. Implementing teleworking for all possible workers;
9. Implementing staggered shifts for all possible workers;
10. Holding all meetings and conferences virtually, wherever possible;
11. Delivering intangible services remotely wherever possible;
12. Discouraging workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment;
13. Prohibiting handshaking and other unnecessary person-to-person contact in the workplace;
14. Placing notices that encourage hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen;
15. Suspending the use of Personal Identification Number ("PIN") pads, PIN entry devices, electronic signature capture,

- and any other credit card receipt signature requirements to the extent such suspension is permitted by agreements with credit card companies and credit agencies;
16. Enforcing social distancing of non-cohabitating persons while present on such entity's leased or owned property;
  17. For retailers and service providers, providing for alternative points of sale outside of buildings, including curbside pick-up or delivery of products and/or services if an alternative point of sale is permitted under Georgia law;
  18. Increasing physical space between workers and customers;
  19. Providing disinfectant and sanitation products for workers to clean their workspace, equipment, and tools;
  20. Increasing physical space between workers' worksites to at least six (6) feet.

#### **IT IS FURTHER**

#### **ORDERED:**

The term "Critical Infrastructure" shall refer to businesses, establishments, corporations, non-profit corporations, and organizations as defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as "essential critical infrastructure workforce," in guidance dated March 19, 2020, and revised on March 28, 2020, and those suppliers which provide essential goods and services to the critical infrastructure workforce as well as entities that provide legal services, home hospice, and non-profit corporations or non-profit organizations that offer food distribution or other health or mental health services. The operation of Critical Infrastructure shall not be impeded by county, municipal, or local ordinance.

Critical Infrastructure that continues in-person operation during the effective dates of this Order shall implement measures which mitigate the exposure and spread of COVID-19 among its workforce. Such measures may include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Screening and evaluating workers who exhibit signs of illness, such as a fever over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, or shortness of breath;
2. Requiring workers who exhibit signs of illness to not report to work or to seek medical attention;
3. Enhancing sanitation of the workplace as appropriate;
4. Requiring hand washing or sanitation by workers at appropriate places within the business location;
5. Providing personal protective equipment as available and appropriate to the function and location of the worker within the business location;
6. Prohibiting gatherings of workers during working hours;

7. Permitting workers to take breaks and lunch outside, in their office or personal workspace, or in such other areas where proper social distancing is attainable;
8. Implementing teleworking for all possible workers;
9. Implementing staggered shifts for all possible workers;
10. Holding all meetings and conferences virtually, wherever possible;
11. Delivering intangible services remotely wherever possible;
12. Discouraging workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment;
13. Providing disinfectant and sanitation products for workers to clean their workspace, equipment, and tools;
14. Prohibiting handshaking and other unnecessary person-to-person contact in the workplace; and
15. Placing notices that encourage hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen; and
16. Suspending the use of Personal Identification Number ("PIN") pads, PIN entry devices, electronic signature capture, and any other credit card receipt signature requirements to the extent such suspension is permitted by agreements with credit card companies and credit agencies.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That the Georgia Department of Economic Development is authorized to issue guidance to any business, corporation, organization, or industry trade group regarding its status as Critical Infrastructure. This guidance shall not require a finding of fact but shall be in writing and shall be considered a final agency action for the purpose of proceedings under Code Section 50-13-19.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** All restaurants and private social clubs shall cease providing dine-in services. Takeout, curbside pick-up, and delivery are permitted in accordance with the provisions of this Order.

This provision shall not limit the operation of dine-in services in hospitals, healthcare facilities, nursing homes, or other long-term care facilities; however, to the extent possible, such facilities should offer in-room dining.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That all gyms, fitness centers, bowling alleys, theaters, live performance venues, operators of amusement rides as defined by

Code Section 25-15-51, body art studios permitted pursuant to Code Section 31-40-2, businesses registered pursuant to Code Sections 43-10-11 and 43-10-18, estheticians as defined by Code Section 43-10-1(8), hair designers as defined by Code Section 43-10-1(9), persons licensed to practice massage therapy pursuant to Code Section 43-24A-8, and businesses which possess a license to operate as or otherwise meet the definition of “bar” as defined by Code Section 3-1-2(2.1), shall cease in-person operations and shall close to the public while this Order is in effect.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That persons required to shelter in place under any provision of this Order shall not receive visitors, except as follows:

1. Visitors providing medical, behavioral health, or emergency services or medical supplies or medication, including home hospice;
2. Visitors providing support for the person to conduct activities of daily living or instrumental activities of daily living;
3. Visitors providing necessary supplies and services, such as food and supplies for household consumption and use, supplies and equipment needed to work from home, and products needed to maintain safety, sanitation, and essential maintenance of the home or residence; or
4. Visitors received during end-of-life circumstances.

To the extent practicable under the circumstances, visitors shall maintain a minimum distance of six (6) feet between themselves and all other occupants of the person’s home or residence. Any visitors visiting for the sole purpose of delivering medication, supplies, or other tangible goods shall, to the extent practicable, deliver such items in a manner that does not require in-person contact or require the deliverer to enter the person’s home or residence.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That the provisions of this Order related to visitors listed in the immediately preceding paragraph shall be strictly enforced against nursing homes or other long-term care facilities, including inpatient hospice, assisted living communities, personal care homes, intermediate care homes, community living arrangements, and community integration homes.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That an exception to any shelter-in-place requirement set forth hereunder applies in the event of an emergency. In such cases,

persons are encouraged to leave their homes or residences and shelter in place in accordance with the rules included in this Order at a safe alternate location. Persons experiencing homelessness are urged to obtain shelter and to contact governmental and other entities for assistance.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That the Department of Public Health, the Department of Public Safety, or any other state department or state officer deputized by the Governor or the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency are, after providing reasonable notice, authorized to mandate the closure of any business, establishment, corporation, non-profit corporation, or organization not in compliance with this Order for a period not to extend beyond the term of this Order.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That the Adjutant General of the Georgia National Guard and the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety shall provide resources as requested to assist in the enforcement of this Order.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That pursuant to Code Section 38-3-51, the powers of counties and cities conveyed in Titles 36 and 38, including those specific powers enumerated in Code Sections 36-5-22.1 and 36-35-3 are hereby suspended to the extent of suspending enforcement of any local ordinance or order adopted or issued since March 1, 2020, with the stated purpose or effect of responding to a public health state of emergency, ordering residents to shelter-in-place, ordering a quarantine, or combatting the spread of coronavirus or COVID-19 that in any way conflicts, varies, or differs from the terms of this Order. Enforcement of all such ordinances and orders is hereby suspended and no county or municipality shall adopt any similar ordinance or order while this Order is in effect, except for such ordinances or orders as are designed to enforce compliance with this Order.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That if one or more of the provisions contained in this Order shall conflict with the provisions of any previous Executive Order or Agency Administrative Order, the provisions of this Order shall control. Further, in the event of any conflict, the provisions of any quarantine or isolation Order issued to a specific person by the Department of Public Health shall control.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That nothing in this Order shall be construed to suspend or limit the sale, dispensing, or transportation of firearms or ammunition, or any component thereof.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That pursuant to Code Section 38-3-7, any person who violates this Order shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Officials enforcing this Order should take reasonable steps to provide notice prior to issuing a citation or making an arrest.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** This Order rescinds and replaces Executive Order 03.23.20.01.

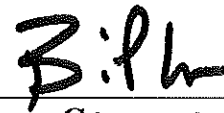
**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** That if one or more of the provisions contained in this Order shall be held to be invalid, in violation of the Georgia Constitution, in violation of Georgia law, or unenforceable in any respect, such invalidity, violation, or unenforceability shall not affect any other provisions of this Order, but, in such case, this Order shall be construed as if such invalid, illegal, or unenforceable provision had never been contained within the Order.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:** All provisions of the Order shall become effective for a period beginning at 6:00 P.M. on Friday, April 3, 2020, and expiring at 11:59 P.M. on Monday, April 13, 2020.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> day of April 2020, at 3:12 P.M.



GOVERNOR