NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: August 19, 2021  
  
**Mississippi State Board of Education Allows Hybrid Scheduling During COVID-19 Surge**

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) voted today to allow school districts to use hybrid scheduling if needed to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

The SBE’s decision was made in consultation with the Mississippi State Department of Health. The hybrid scheduling option is available immediately and will extend through October 31, 2021. The SBE will consider extending the option beyond November 1 at its October meeting if COVID-19 data show it is needed. Hybrid scheduling can only be used to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

“The Mississippi Department of Education recommended the policy change because some superintendents expressed concern about the challenge of ensuring adequate social distance among students,” said Dr. Carey Wright, state superintendent of education. “Hybrid scheduling gives districts another strategy to help educate students safely.”

Before the start of the 2021-22 school year, the SBE set requirements for districts that choose to offer a virtual learning option and established standards for schoolwide virtual learning days.

Under the SBE policies, districts that offer a virtual option for individual students must adopt local board-approved policies that include the criteria for students to participate in virtual learning, requirements for equipment, connectivity, attendance and student conduct, and assurances of equal access and non-discrimination and the delivery of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities.

Districts are still required to provide a minimum of 180 days of instruction and must ensure any virtual learning days include actual teaching for a minimum of 330 minutes, as state law requires.

To assist with virtual learning, the Legislature provided $200 million in 2020 through the [Mississippi Connects](https://www.mdek12.org/MSConnects) program, which provided every public-school student with a computer device to learn. The next phase of the Mississippi Connects program includes professional development and support from digital learning instructional coaches, who will help teachers, schools and districts effectively use educational technology and improve student outcomes statewide.

More information: [www.mdek12.org/guidance2021-22](https://www.mdek12.org/guidance2021-22)

###