

## End of School Year Gatherings and Graduations

**Updated. May 15, 2020**

### Background

In his [directive issued on March 26, 2020](#), Governor Scott ordered that schools for students in grades PreK-12 shall remain dismissed for in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year unless otherwise ordered. He further directed the Secretary of Education to issue guidance on or before Friday, May 8, 2020 on end of school year gatherings and graduations.

### Public Health Context

The deadline of May 8, 2020 for this guidance was established to allow for the most current public health data (see [healthvermont.gov/covid-19](http://healthvermont.gov/covid-19)) to inform this guidance while at the same time giving local school officials sufficient time to plan for the end of the school year. The current public health data, in the context of most school calendars, does not support the practical re-opening of school for in-person instruction this spring. Furthermore, at this time group gatherings are limited to 10 people or less, with careful physical distancing and hygiene requirements. While this limitation is expected to evolve as Vermont continues to respond to COVID-19, the timing of any such changes is not certain. For planning purposes, schools should expect that larger group gatherings will not be permitted prior to the end of the school year. Accordingly, schools may only plan in-person end of school year gatherings and graduations consistent with the State's limitations on the size of such gatherings; any other such events shall occur virtually or by means other than in-person gatherings. Schools are encouraged to plan creatively with their communities for opportunities to celebrate milestones and graduations in ways that are safe and supportive of students and their achievements. All end of year gatherings and graduations shall be designed to ensure equal access and participation by all of the affected students.

### Updated May 15, 2020 –

We have received multiple questions about whether school districts can plan alternative ceremonies that comply with the guidelines above by using drive in movie theaters, parades, and other ways to keep families separated from one another. Creating such drive up celebrations are allowable, **as long as participants** remain in their vehicles. Vehicles must be spaced a minimum of six (6) feet apart and no gatherings outside vehicles are allowed. For more information, please refer to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's [Updated Workplace and Stay Home Stay Safe Order Guidance](#).

### Use of School Facilities

Although school will remain closed for in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, we expect there will come a time when school facilities could be utilized during the

summer for educational or community activities. These activities might include student support services such as tutoring and social-emotional learning opportunities, professional development and training for staff, or community programs such as summer camps.

### **Waiver of School Calendar Days**

School districts shall follow their established calendars for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. The State Board gave authority to grant waivers for unanticipated closures under 16 V.S.A. 1071(c) that are the result of “consultation with the Secretary of Education and the Commissioner of Health or an order of the Department of Health in the 2019-2020 school year.” Instructional days during the closure period from March 18 – April 13 pursuant to the [Governor’s Directive No. 5](#) are hereby waived for all SUs/SDs.