

PRESS RELEASE

TRANSCRIPT: GOVERNOR PHIL SCOTT MARCH 27 ADDRESS ON SCHOOL DISMISSAL

27 MARCH 2020

Montpelier, Vt. - At a press conference Friday, Governor Phil Scott and members of his administration provided an update on the [Governor's directive to dismiss schools for in-person instruction for the remainder of 2019-2020 school year.](#)

"The education of our kids, along with the bonding and learning experiences they get at school, are incredibly important, so I fully understand and appreciate the impact this will have on our kids individually and families across Vermont," said Governor Scott. "But from my vantage point, I believe it's the right decision because it's for the health of our kids, communities and the entire state. That's why we're doing this—to keep people safe, to slow the spread and to save lives."

[Click here to view the full press conference](#) and see a full transcript of Governor Scott's remarks below.

For the latest information and guidance relating to Vermont's COVID-19 response, visit [www.healthvermont.gov/covid19.](#)

Transcript:

Good morning. Thank you all for continuing to tune into these important updates.

As this pandemic continues, the health and safety of all Vermonters is my top priority. Every decision I've made is guided by what's best for public health based on the best science we have available. And, as I've said, as the virus continues to spread and we learn more about COVID-19, Vermonters can expect we may have to take further action to help slow it down.

Slowing the spread of infection is critical to making sure we can protect the vulnerable, meaning the elderly and others who are at risk for serious illness and, in too many cases, even death.

These steps are also necessary to keep our healthcare system from being overwhelmed like we're seeing right before our eyes in other states like New York. What we're doing is important to the health and safety of all Vermonters.

To help reach these goals, on March 15, I ordered the temporary dismissal of schools. While we hoped this would be enough, that has not proven to be the case.

So, working closely with the experts at our Department of Health and the Agency of Education, I came to the difficult decision to extend dismissal and close in-person instruction at schools for the remainder of the school year. However, to make sure our kids continue learning, I'm asking districts to complete plans for continued education through remote learning so we're ready to go April 13.

I know this news is incredibly difficult. Let's face it: It's disappointing, frustrating and it's just plain sad for kids, parents, teachers and all school employees. My heart goes out to all of you. It's going to be hard. I know that.

The education of our kids, along with the bonding and learning experiences they get at school, are incredibly important, so I fully understand and appreciate the impact this will have on our kids individually, and families across Vermont.

But from my vantage point, I believe it's the right decision because it's for the health of our kids, communities and the entire state. That's why we're doing this—to keep people safe, to slow the spread, to save lives.

The sobering reality is: Before too long, each of us will know someone who has lost their life from this virus. That's why we must come together and support each other to get through this.

Even with this decision, it's my hope that with the mitigation steps we've taken, our children will be able to return at the end of the year for activities like graduation. But we won't make that decision until we're certain it's safe.

For now, we need to use our creativity to find ways to deliver quality remote learning for our students through the end of the school year.

I want to thank school administrators, superintendents, educators and staff around the state who are working hard to adapt to incredibly challenging circumstances. The fact is, we need your help and we appreciate your public service.

Childcare providers will also remain closed but will still be able to provide care for the children of those workers critical to the state's response. I've been impressed with school districts who have worked very hard to set up creative and critically needed programs to offer care for students whose parents are working on the frontlines. These educators and staff, who are finding ways to support these families, have been so important to our COVID-19 response efforts.

I'm proud and appreciative of their hard work, creative can-do attitude and their willingness to step up in this moment of service. These educators, and the staff supporting them, represent the very best of our public education system.

We find ourselves at a time when there's no road map available. So, our education leaders, parents and kids—and all Vermonters for that matter—have never been asked to do anything quite like this. But these times require all of us to think outside of the box to find creative solutions, and we must work together to ensure we still get the best outcomes possible for our kids.

I want to assure you, me and my team are here to help every step of the way as we navigate these uncharted waters together. Our way out of this is using the best information we have, common sense about what we want and what we need and working together in service to Vermonters.

The Agency of Education will be providing technical guidance to districts by the end of this week and Secretary French is with us on the phone today to answer questions.

I want to thank the many education leaders, teachers, parents, staff and others who've stepped up during this difficult time. I know this is not easy. But your commitment to public service and your ability to adapt is exactly what we need.

It's what makes us Vermont strong—and united as well. We will get through this and we'll do it together.