State superintendent of education presents statewide digital learning plan to Mississippi legislature

Press Release

Dr. Carey Wright, state superintendent of education, testified before the Mississippi Senate Education Committee on May 13, outlining the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) plan to connect all Mississippi children to the internet so schools can deliver high-quality instruction digitally.

"The COVID-19 public health crisis that caused statewide school closures has amplified the inequities that our students live with," Wright said. "Children with no access to computers or the internet at home have been put at a great disadvantage when schools shifted to distance learning."

MDE's plan aims to bring equity to education by putting a device in the hands of every student who needs one, ensuring students have internet access at home, training teachers how to teach remotely, and providing districts with a choice of high-quality options for a digital curriculum and an online system to deliver it.

"We have a moral imperative to ensure that every child in Mississippi has an equal opportunity and learn, whether they are at school or at home," Wright said.

Mississippi is receiving $1.25 billion in COVID-19 relief funds. The MDE seeks to use $250 million of those funds for equipment, licenses and professional development.

The plan would need an additional $100 million a year for the next two years for license renewals, professional development and refreshing equipment.

Districts have been allocated over $160 million in federal education funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to support student learning, though those funds are not sufficient to address their technology needs.

The percentage of Mississippi households that don't have a computer device ranges from 44% in Greenwood to 8% in Oxford, according to the U.S. Census and the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Statewide, 32% of households do not have broadband.

MDE's multi-year solution would close the gaps in Mississippi's broadband coverage by providing hotspots to homes that don't have high-speed internet.

"This is 2020. Every child should have access to a device and high-quality instructional materials," Wright said.

The MDE has been working with national experts to develop its digital learning plan and has sought support for it from the Mississippi Alliance for Nonprofits and Philanthropy and national education groups.

Wright told lawmakers about the advantages of equipping students with technology, whether they are learning at home or in school. The technology would provide tools for home use to reach English Learners and to meet the sensory needs of students with disabilities. It could also help alleviate the teacher shortage by enabling highly qualified teachers to teach students in different parts of the state remotely.

"There has never been a better opportunity for the state to address the inequities that exist among our students," Wright said. "A person's education is life determining. It defines their future. This is a life-changing opportunity for the children of Mississippi."

FDA authorizes first diagnostic test using at-home collection of saliva specimens

Press Release

Earlier this month, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized the first diagnostic test with the option of using home-collected saliva samples for COVID-19 testing.

Specifically, the FDA issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) to Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory for their COVID-19 laboratory developed test (LDT), which had been previously added to the high complexity molecular-based LDT "umbrella" EUA, to permit testing of samples self-collected by patients at home using the Spectrum Solutions LLC SDNA-1000 Saliva Collection Device.

This announcement builds on last month's EUA for the first diagnostic test with a home-collection option, which uses a sample collected from the patient's nose with a nasal swab and saline.

"Authorizing additional diagnostic tests with the option of at-home sample collection will continue to increase patient access to testing for COVID-19. This provides an additional option for the easy, safe and convenient collection of samples required for testing without traveling to a doctor's office, hospital or testing site," said FDA Commissioner Stephen M. Hahn, M.D. "We will continue to work around the clock to support the development of accurate and reliable tests, as we have done throughout this pandemic. The FDA has authorized more than 80 COVID-19 tests and adding more options for at-home sample collection is an important advancement in diagnostic testing during this public health emergency."

Today's EUA for Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory's molecular test permits testing of a saliva sample collected from the patient using a designated self-collection kit. Once patients collect their saliva sample, they return it to the Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory in a sealed package for testing.

The Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory test is currently the only authorized COVID-19 diagnostic test that uses saliva samples to test for SARS-CoV-2, the strain of coronavirus that causes COVID-19. The test remains prescription only.

This authorization is limited to testing performed at the Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory using their molecular LDT COVID-19 authorized test for saliva specimens collected using the Spectrum Solutions LLC SDNA-1000 Saliva Collection Device. It is important to note that this is not a general authorization for at-home collection of patient samples using other collection methods, saliva collection devices, or tests, or for tests fully conducted at home.

Food assistance program to begin taking applications

Press Release

USDA will soon begin taking applications for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. As part of applying for the program, applicants will need to contact the Farm Service Agency county office at their local USDA Service Center to schedule an appointment. Find local offices at farmers.gov/cfap.

Local FSA staff will work with applicants for the program, and through forms asking for this type of information:

- Contact
- Personal, including your Tax Identification Number
- Farming operating structure
- Adjusted Gross Income to ensure eligibility
- Direct deposit to enable payment processing

Please do not send any personal information to USDA without first initiating contact through a phone call.

FSA has streamlined the signup process to not require an acreage report at the time of application and a USDA farm number may not be immediately needed.

For existing customer, this information is likely on file at your local Service Center.

What Can You Do Now?

While the application process has not started, start gathering and understanding your farm's recent sales and inventory.

How Will USDA Accept Applications?

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only. Once the application period opens, please call your FSA county office to schedule an appointment.

Our staff are working with our agricultural producers by phone and using email, fax, mail and online tools to accept applications.

New to Working with the Farm Service Agency?

FSA has county offices located at USDA Service Centers across the country. To find your office and more information on CFAP, visit farmers.gov/CFAP.

MSU plans for in-person classroom instruction in fall 2020 semester

Press Release

Mississippi State University President Mark E. Keenum said the university is fully committed to welcoming students back to campus this fall and that plans to resume in-person classroom and laboratory instruction in the Fall 2020 semester are "on schedule and taking solid form" as the university continues development of specific new operating guidelines.

Keenum on April 28 announced MSU's "institutional intention" for MSU to resume more traditional operations in the fall. The university has convened a COVID-19 task force that is focused on fostering a safe environment for the return of MSU students, faculty, staff, and visitors to campus within the confines of official federal and state government guidance and that of the leadership of recognized public health agencies.

The MSU task force will produce guidelines to assist MSU across all campuses in transitioning back to more traditional campus activities. These will include:

—Revising the academic calendar to minimize disruption.

—Focusing on spread reduction techniques including social and physical distancing, increased cleaning and disinfectant protocols across facilities, and the availability and use of face coverings.

—Re-populating MSU through a robust screening strategy bolstered by testing where needed and contact tracing. Containment and isolation procedures if positive COVID-19 cases become present on campus.

—Exploring the appropriate mixture of hybrid, online, and face-to-face instruction, classroom and other facilities usage, and innovative class scheduling.

—Considering innovative and alternative best practices in campus life, business functions, athletics, Extension and other public outreach, and campus life.

With MSU Provost David Shaw's leadership position on the state task force in developing strategies for the reopening of all of the state's public universities, Keenum said MSU will benefit from the expertise of other veteran higher education administrators on the IHL task force and share that information with MSU's COVID-19 task force. Joining Shaw on the IHL task force is MSU Vice President for Student Affairs Regina Hyatt.

Keenum said MSU's COVID-19 task force would develop a strategy to reopen that included guidance and input from the IHL task force, direct input from MSU stakeholders, and the shared governance model that already exists on the MSU campus with faculty, staff and students.

2019 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report
West Holmes Water Association
PWS#: 260027
May 2020

We're pleased to present to you this year's Annual Quality Water Report. This report is designed to inform you about the quality water and services we deliver to you every day. Our constant goal is to provide you with a safe and dependable supply of drinking water. We want you to understand the efforts we make to continually improve the water treatment process and protect our water resources. We are committed to providing you with information because informed customers are our best allies. Our water source is from wells drawing from the Upper Meridian Wilcox Aquifer.

The source water assessment has been completed for our public water system to determine the overall susceptibility of its drinking water supply to identify potential sources of contamination. A report containing detailed information on how the susceptibility determinations were made has been furnished to our public water system and is available for viewing upon request. The wells for the West Holmes Water Association have received moderate to higher rankings in terms of susceptibility to contamination.

If you have any questions about this report or concerning your water utility, please contact Ottis Clark at 662.299.9908. We want our valued customers to be informed about their water utility. If you want to learn more, please join us at any of our regularly scheduled meetings. They are held on the first Monday in May at 6:00 PM at the office complex.

We routinely monitor for contaminants in your drinking water according to Federal and State laws. This table below lists all of the drinking water contaminants that were detected during the period of January 1st to December 31st , 2019. In cases where monitoring wasn't required in 2019, the table reflects the most recent results. As water travels over the surface of land or underground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive materials and can pick up substances or contaminants from the presence of animals or from human activity; microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, that may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife; inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or result from urban storm-water runoff, industrial, or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming; pesticides and herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban storm-water runoff, and residential uses; organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations and septic systems; radioactive contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities. In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, EPA prescribes regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. All drinking water, including bottled drinking water, may be reasonably expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. It's important to remember that the presence of these contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk.

In this table you will find many terms and abbreviations you might not be familiar with. To help you better understand these terms we've provided the following definitions:

Action Level - the concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) - The "Maximum Allowed" (MCL) is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) - The "Goal"(MCLG) is the level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (MRDL) – The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary to control microbial contaminants.

Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (MRDLG) – The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk of health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

Parts per million (ppm) or Milligrams per liter (mg/l) - one part per million corresponds to one minute in two years or a single penny in $10,000.

Parts per billion (ppb) or Micrograms per liter - one part per billion corresponds to one minute in 2,000 years, or a single penny in $10,000,000.

TEST RESULTS

Contaminant	Violation Y/N	Date Collected	Level Detected	Range of Detects or # of Samples Exceeding MCL/ACL/MRDL	Unit Measure -ment	MCLG	MCL	Likely Source of Contamination
Inorganic Contaminants								
10. Barium	N	2018*	.0092	.0056 - .0092	ppm	2	2	Discharge of drilling wastes; discharge from metal refineries; erosion of natural deposits
13. Chromium	N	2018*	1.9	.8 – 1.9	ppb	100	100	Discharge from steel and pulp mills; erosion of natural deposits
14. Copper	N	2015/17*	.1	0	ppm	1.3	AL=1.3	Corrosion of household plumbing systems; erosion of natural deposits; leaching from wood preservatives
16. Fluoride	N	2018*	.169	.166 - .169	ppm	4	4	Erosion of natural deposits; water additive which promotes strong teeth; discharge from fertilizer and aluminum factories
17. Lead	N	2015/17*	3	0	ppb	0	AL=15	Corrosion of household plumbing systems, erosion of natural deposits
Disinfection By-Products								
81. HAA5	N	2019	42	No Range	ppb	0	60	By-Product of drinking water disinfection.
82. TTHM [Total trihalomethanes]	N	2019	37.5	No Range	ppb	0	80	By-product of drinking water chlorination.
Chlorine	N	2019	1.3	.7 – 1.7	mg/l	0	MRDL = 4	Water additive used to control microbes

* *Most recent sample. No sample required for 2019.*

We are required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants on a monthly basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not our drinking water meets health standards. In an effort to ensure systems complete all monitoring requirements, MSDH now notifies systems of any missing samples prior to the end of the compliance period.

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. Our water system is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead. The Mississippi State Department of Health Public Health Laboratory offers lead testing. Please contact 601.576.7582 if you wish to have your water tested.

All sources of drinking water are subject to potential contamination by substances that are naturally occurring or man made. These substances can be microbes, inorganic or organic chemicals and radioactive substances. All drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1.800.426.4791.

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/CDC guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline 1.800.426.4791.

The West Holmes Water Association works around the clock to provide top quality water to every tap. We ask that all our customers help us protect our water sources, which are the heart of our community, our way of life and our children's future.