

Vt. Ed Agency to announce summer programming plans

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RUTLAND, Vt. (WCAX) - New school guidance from the Vermont Agency of Education and the Department of Health will address pandemic summer programming.

“School facilities will basically be available as they normally would in any given year, no doubt with some limitations,” said Vermont Education Secretary Dan French Thursday, previewing new health guidance for schools that will be released sometime next week, [including new three-foot distancing guidelines for older students](#).

“I really hope that if the guidance is in favor of us opening our buildings, we will be able to,” said Debbie Alexander, principal of the Lothrop School in Pittsford.

Last year, school buildings were closed to the public and had restricted access. The Lothrop School collaborates with the Pittsford recreation department for summer programming. “In the morning, sometimes students receive academic intervention and then they join the rec for the afternoon programming,” Alexander said.

French says he expects kids will end their school year in June as normal. “For the most part, I don’t see the school year being extended through a regulatory requirement,” he said.

That comes as welcome news to both students and parents. “I think it’s well deserved at this point,” said Kristen Wimett, a parent.

Bonnie Chmielewski is among parents who say the state has asked a lot of teachers and staff over the past year and that they need a rest. “If they’re not burned out, that’s amazing. They need a break so that they can come back recharged for probably another hard year,” she said.

Alexander says students have experienced an educational loss, but it’s just as important for kids to be outside enjoying somewhat normal summer activities. “It will be just as important for students to start their summer in a traditional way, to be with one another, to have that break,” she said.