

The Arkansas democrat is reporting today that The Little Rock School District and the teachers' union on Sunday evening appeared to be heading toward a confrontation over covid-19 safety precautions as the president of the union promised an end to in-person teaching and said educators were prepared to switch to an entirely virtual mode of instruction beginning today.

About 8 p.m. on Sunday, the Little Rock Education Association issued a statement saying educators would only provide virtual instruction beginning today because of the district's covid-19 procedures. The union described safety measures within schools as inadequate and routinely ignored by students and staff.

"At this juncture, LREA members believe that our schools are not safe for in-person instruction and that the risk to our students, our staff members, and our community is too great," the statement said.

Earlier in the day, a day that saw the state report just under 500 new covid-19 cases, Little Rock School District Superintendent Mike Poore in a letter to parents vowed that schools would remain open. Employees who do not report to work could face discipline, he said.

In a statement provided by a spokeswoman, Gov. Asa Hutchinson on Sunday evening said the state has had "a good start to this school year" amid the expected challenges, with the well-being of students and teachers as the top priority.

"With a declining positivity rate in Pulaski County and with the safety measures in place, it is difficult to understand the resistance to teaching in the classroom," Hutchinson said.

In his letter to parents, the superintendent of the state-controlled Little Rock School District emphasized that schools will remain open for in-person instruction today.

The school district's daily covid-19 case update on Sunday noted no new positive cases nor individuals entering quarantine because of possible exposure.

Teresa Knapp Gordon, the president of the Little Rock Education Association, did not respond to calls requesting comment on Sunday evening.