Distance Learning Feedback Report
Results Brief
June 15, 2020

Introduction

This Spring, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) began implementing statewide distance learning in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In June, MDE asked the University of Minnesota's Wisconsin-Minnesota Comprehensive to facilitate feedback sessions with 25 of MDE's stakeholder groups (see Appendix A). MDE extended invitations for participation in topic discussions about distance learning implementation to see what lessons were learned and what potential guidance is needed moving forward should distance learning continue in fall 2020.

Participants

A total of 153 participants representing stakeholder groups from educational organizations, community organizations, teachers, advocates and families engaged in distance learning discussions conducted via Zoom between June 8-10, 2020. [Note: student feedback groups are being held June 16 and their insights will be added]. Each session was facilitated by a staff member from WMCC using a set of guiding questions (see Appendix B). All points of view were welcomed and valued. The participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and provide feedback that could inform future planning, even if they seemed different from what others shared. Each session was recorded and was only accessed by WMCC for analysis. A representative from MDE listened in on live sessions but did not participate.

A summary of key findings from the 25 feedback sessions are presented below, followed by the summary of the results details collected from each feedback group.

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings are presented below by areas of most concern, what feedback groups think MDE should know to develop future distance learning guidance, feedback on operational guidance from MDH/CDC, legislative/policy adjustments needed, transportation guidelines, and additional feedback.

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Areas of Most Concern

Participants were asked about their **areas of most concern** about distance learning as the relate Access, Communication, Instruction, and Supports. They were then asked to consider MDE's definition of **educational equity** (see Appendix B, slide 5 Q2) and to share their concerns about equity in the areas they identified as concerns.

Key findings across all 25 feedback sessions show 4 primary areas where specific guidance is needed from MDE to help school districts and charter schools in areas they are most concerned with about distance learning.

1. Overwhelmingly across all groups, **reliable access to internet** was a major challenge that produced inequitable access to almost everything else (i.e., instruction, supports, communication)
2. The use of different **Platforms** and **approaches** for learning was problematic across all groups
    a. Multiple platforms confusing (i.e., different at different levels and even within the same level)
    b. Synchronous teaching (**"daily interaction"**) with regards to instruction/learning seems to keep kids more engaged, however it was not well defined and implementation seem inequitable across student groups
3. MDE's **guidance was not provided in a timely manner** in spring making it difficult for districts to develop adequate specific information needed about distance learning.
4. **Special education services/accommodations were not effectively delivered**

What Should MDE Know to Develop Future Distance Learning Guidance?
Key findings across feedback groups show 11 topics that participants want MDE to know about as the department develops future guidance. Feedback groups were asked, what would you like MDE to know as they develop future guidance in order to support students and families with distance learning in your schools?

- MDE needs to provide ***better communication and sooner.*** **How** it came this spring was an overarching concern expressed by leaders across multiple groups. They would like clear and consistent communication as soon as possible. **Clear communication around attendance** came up in many groups.

- **More planning time** provided at the beginning of the school year is needed for staff. This was requested in multiple groups including teachers and principals
- **Provide a learning management platform** so that all teachers, parents and students at least have familiarity with it and the confusion is reduced and so subsets of educators can focus on how to make modifications for SWD, EL students, etc.
- **Childcare will need to be addressed. While** funding for emergency childcare was good, more parents back at work will require childcare needs schools are not prepared to meet.
- There is a desire for **MDE to address concerns about trauma that people are experiencing** including SEL for adults and students.
- If a hybrid model is adopted in the fall, but resources are limited, it may be best to **prioritize students who are most in need of in-person instruction. This** includes SWD, EL students and younger kids.
- Across all groups, there is a strong **concern about starting distance learning in the fall** when relationships with teachers are understandably not yet established
- **Secondary course offerings** will need to be **scaled back**. How can MDE provide ways to be on the same page for power standards and high-leverage standards?
- Consider putting a **moratorium on typical MDE work that requires sustained engagement of schools**, like the review of the science standards.
- Provide **temporary flexibility to schools** if in distance or hybrid models in areas like:
    - Licensure – let teachers teach outside their license
    - Content requirements i.e. art. music, physical education
    - Teacher evaluation
    - Funding streams
- **Provide template language for contracts and agreements** including Charter Authorizer agreements in order to led educators worry about educating and the Department provide state-wide guidance on things like teacher contracts

Feedback on Operational Guidelines from MDH/CDC

Key findings across feedback sessions show concerns among all groups with implementation of the guidelines. Participants were provided a summary of the current MDH/CDC guidance related to the operation of schools (see Appendix B, Question 5).

- Overwhelmingly, **examples, scenarios, decision trees, flow charts, and clear communication were asked for from MDE** in response to MDH/CDC. Specific areas include:
    - Staffing models

- Staggered start times
- Use of funds to meet guidelines
- Bulk purchasing for PPE; List of reliable vendors
- Social distancing suggestions/instructional materials by level
- Checklists for district/school/specialty areas like SPED/EL/Community Ed
- Refusal of compliance – staff, students, parents
- Guidance on contractual language – for MOUs with unions, service providers
- Acceptable "partnerships" with community organizations specifically around mental health and family support
- If we are back in school, what if families don't want their kids to be there? Educational materials for families about returning… in multiple languages

Legislative/Policy Adjustments Needed

Key findings for feedback about potential legislative/policy changes were not legislative requirements, though respondents shared a variety of areas they feel MDE could help guide and provide temporary relief from expectations.

- **Increase in funding to schools** to deal with the increased costs of COVID
  - Technology
  - Staffing
  - Materials
  - PPE
- Hold harmless customers with school aged children with regards to payment for **Internet access. This should be** viewed as heat is handled in the winter –it cannot be disconnected during distance learning
- Flexibility in/on:
  - Student contact time - **number of days/hours** students are required to be "in school"
  - **Oct 1 count** date
  - Post Labor-Day Start date
  - Calendar
  - Funding use
  - Dropping students after 15 days
- Pause on:
  - **State-wide accountability testing**
  - **Teacher Development and Evaluation** requirements

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- Standards review
- World's Best Workforce

- Extension of **tenure decisions** for this upcoming year

Transportation Guidelines

Key findings from feedback sessions show 4 areas of consideration for transportation.

- Trust that MDE will change as the dial turns
- Concern regarding implementation reality of health screening by drivers
- Current guidance takes a bus capacity of 77 to 10; YMCA as a pilot site
- Feel there will need to be a second adult on the bus for insuring guidelines can be met

Additional Feedback –"What Did We Miss?"

Key feedback for areas we may have missed provided 8 additional areas for MDE's consideration when developing distance learning guidelines.

- Develop ways to help parents in accessing and understanding technology
- Help districts with ways to assess how things are going so they can engage more or pull back when needed. Provide a template for a continuous improvement cycle.
- **Exemplars** of what ***did work***. Can the department provide that at each grade level?
- Human resource departments (and those schools without them) may need more help with things like guidance on open enrolment, contracts, leave of absences.
- Secondary principals were **really frustrated about the graduation situation**. Those who acted in accordance with the guidelines took a lot of negative pushback, and then two-weeks later the Governor announced gatherings of 250 outside –this caused backlash for the high school principals
- Would like MDE to develop different models/frameworks to share with districts and charters.
- Families need more support beyond the school for distance learning to continue they suggest:
  - Consistent platform
  - Contact person for assistance beyond just the teacher
  - Clear guidance on what to do if they are not comfortable sending their child back to school even if school is face to face
- A need to more **deliberately include students and parents in the process** of developing guidelines.

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Summary of the Results

Participants were asked to respond to several questions regarding lessons learned about distance learning and future considerations for developing distance learning guidance in Minnesota. A summary of the results from feedback sessions are presented in the sections below. First, participants were asked to identify ***areas of most concern*** with regard to distance learning focusing on ***access, communication, instruction, and supports***. Second, each group was presented with MDE's definition of ***educational equity*** (see Appendix B, Question 2), and asked to share their thoughts about educational equity for students and staff in those areas of concern. The groups were also asked ***what MDE should to know to develop future guidance for districts*** to help support students and families. Lastly, the groups were asked for ***feedback on operational guidelines*** developed by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for school sites to follow to the extent possible, while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. (Source: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html).

The table below provides an overview of the results generated from an analysis of feedback discussions related to areas of most concern, general concerns for each area, and educational equity concerns. The remaining sections of the report provide a detailed summary of the results of feedback discussions by group and question topics.

Area of Most Concern	General Concerns by Area	Educational Equity Concerns by Area
Access (access to appropriate materials; ensuring internet access; meal delivery of distribution, access to instruction)	• Lack of reliable internet in metro and rural areas • Devices and Materials • Training/support in navigating technical platforms for students, teachers, and parents • IEP supports and modifications • Mental health supports • EL support and language translation • Making sure dietary restrictions are met in meal distribution	• Families with multiple students and poor internet quality/device access • Disparity in access to internet depending upon where you live • Inequitable ability for parents/families to assist whether they were working from home or having to report to work and given their own ability to navigate multiples learning platforms • Additional costs that some schools and families endured to gain access to devices and internet
Communication (communication with families, especially those whose language is predominantly oral and/or not English)	• MDE did not provide sufficient or specific guidance, and when they did provide guidance is was not quick enough, with guidance often coming long after it was needed • Multiple forms of communication to students and families became overwhelming	• EL parents did not know how to access materials and supports • Inequities in what schools deemed "daily interaction"
Instruction (ensuring daily interaction with teachers; tracking attendance; assessment)	• Ensuring daily instruction was challenging and meaningful learning gave way to "busy work" or task completion • More planning time was needed • Very worried about losing the students who are hardest to reach • Schools fixated on grading instead of learning while awaiting for grading guidance from MDE • Distance Learning did not meet unique needs of students	• Asynchronous vs Synchronous learning – Students engaged more in synchronous, but not all could, and not all were offered this • Distance learning has exacerbated the already present inequities that exist • Grading was highly inequitable across schools • Students were not provided necessary materials to complete assignments • Special education services were not delivered effectively

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Area of Most Concern	General Concerns by Area	Educational Equity Concerns by Area
Supports (Meeting staff needs; supporting mental health; supporting ELs; supporting SWDs; supporting HHM; supporting early learning; supporting tribal communities; using partnerships for vulnerable students)	• A great deal of support provided to parents of SWD because of the increased burden on parents • Very difficult to recreate supports/routines virtually for SWD at home • Parents struggled to be "the teacher"	• Greater MN already felt support services underfunded and this made it worse • Teachers with their own children at home had a harder time • Instructions for families in their native language were limited

Areas of Most Concern

Access

Early Learning Educators were most concerned about ***internet access in rural MN***, the abundance of ***communication*** and sometimes conflicting information conveyed to families, and cell phone plans with limited minutes for families. One district sent packets of materials home but then felt that was inequitable because the quality of that experience was good as online versions. Families with multiple children in schools were overwhelmed with the level of communication they received from schools. In addition, there were some children who school staff were not able to reach at all throughout the duration of distance learning.

Elementary School Teachers were most concerned with students not having access to materials, and training and technical support for students, parents and teachers who must navigate multiple online application platforms. These teachers found that students were not as tech savvy when navigating Google platforms, Schoology, Seesaw as they are with social media application. They thought it was unrealistic to assume that elementary students could navigate educational applications when given an iPad. The time it takes to assess online access through surveys and door to door visits have also resulted in additional time delays and students falling behind.

Secondary School Principals (MASSP) were really concerned with a lack of initial **access** to devices, some spent upwards of 5 weeks tracking down who needed devices and deploying them. They also were concerned with lack of internet access in both the metro and rural areas. **In the areas of** supports and **communication**, they were worried about not being able to deliver IEP supports, reach ELL students and overwhelmingly the mental health supports that they felt they lacked in supporting kids. They also commented on staff isolation, and the fact that many were working very long hours just trying to make contact and help kids.

Secondary School Teachers were concerned that experiences with distance learning were mixed across the state. There are a mix of experiences with DL across the state. Communities experienced inequities differently and experienced different kinds of inequities for staff and students. There were major challenges with delivering DL instruction and supports to unique populations such as those needing special education, mental health and English Learner services. Districts did not receive a lot of direction from MDE for these populations. Districts shifted teacher responsibilities and some teachers experienced confusion because at times they were paired with students they did not normally work with. As a result, student needs were not addressed or met similarly as compared to prior to COVID. Staff shortages impacted students getting the support they needed. Instructional rigor was significantly reduced in order to maintain student engagement. Grading was extremely challenging, especially in the high school since these were credit-bearing courses. There is a need to address staff, student and family needs such as technology skills and mental health supports. Many felt overwhelmed.

Minnesota Rural Educators Association (MREA) participants were most concerned about preparing parents to support their child's learning at home, and access to meals and internet for vulnerable subgroups. Some areas of the state have Apostolic and Listavian families with 14-16 children. These parents generally believe teaching should occur in the school and are not prepared to take on this role. In addition many elementary children from these groups and others (Hmong) often take care of younger siblings during the day. Flexibility is needed with teacher schedules. Many students are completing work in the evenings, yet a few districts reported access to teachers from 8:30 - 3:30

Community Education Directors were most concerned about access and supports specifically with transportation and how it affects early childhood. How will families get to the sites? In general, technical decisions around delivering materials, meals, etc. are easier than communication. A particular concern about communication with families in the fall is that if distance learning is done from the start, educators will not have the opportunity to build strong relationships with families first. They feel the success of the spring's distance learning was due in large part to the relationships that were established prior to distance learning. Access to technology is also a concern, especially with ABE, and concerns about access to internet depend on location. In rural areas, there may be no access to internet because companies don't want to put the lines in even if families can pay for the service. In the metro area, however, paying for internet is more of a concern. One suggestion is to make a legislative change so that internet access is handled the same way heat is handled. They were also concerned that a large number of high school students had incompletes due to distance learning and worried about how this will affect graduation rates in the next few years. There needs to be more flexibility and effort to make sure students are college- and community-ready. Also, some families struggled to decide if a fee-based program was worth it during distance learning--this had implications for both the support families were able to receive and the finances of community education. Connecting with and supporting ABE students was also particularly challenging. Some simply chose not to engage. Special education is also a concern in terms of finding new ways to support families in distance learning. There is also a need for state funding support to offset staff costs with lower enrollment numbers.

The **Families in Group 2** were most concerned about access and supports. In terms of access, families voiced that even if internet access was available and there was a computer at home or provided by the school, sometimes families with multiple kids had to share the device which made it difficult. There was also a concern about needing to make sure kids had access to meals and would eat the meals. One parent shared that her children are lactose intolerant and were not given the accommodations they typically receive when eating lunch at school. Instead they received the same packaged food as everyone else, much of which included sandwiches, pasta, and pizza which the kids couldn't eat. Schools need to make sure dietary needs are still met.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 1 participants made it clear that though their districts may have a one-to-one device policy, there is no reliable ***access*** to internet. Grants or funding for city wide internet access would be more useful than hotspots. This particular need is high as it impacts students' ability to participate in class synchronously. ***Communication*** to parents is also a large concern both in what platform to use for each student, as well as, the literacy gap even after materials are translated. It was the recommendation that video instruction may better assist parents with this aspect of distance learning. Participants were also concerned about ***instruction***. Would instruction standards change to become more equitable as some teachers are continuing rigor while others are choosing/forced to do the bare minimum? How can we ensure our students are receiving the same quality of instruction.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 2 participants highlighted four areas of concern for regarding access to distance learning. (1) They said about 25 percent of their ***families do not have stable Internet*** and believe that having schools require students to get online was a huge challenge, even though there were great opportunities and partnerships for free services, there were barriers for families who already had access but had gotten behind on a payment. There were so many steps that needed to be overcome to just provide basic access to the Internet. (2) ***Communication was very challenging for multilingual learners and their parents*** could not access the content and help deliver the information to their children. In addition, parents received multiple emails (six at a time) that were not in their language, which was especially challenging for new immigrant families who do not read or write the language. (3) ***Parents did not know how to access supports they needed to get additional EL tutoring and other supports.*** This created a huge gap equity gap for students who were already behind in school.

Distance Learning Advisory Group 3 participants were most concerned about access and equity. Digital access has been problematic for several families. Parents weren't always asked the correct questions about digital issues, so some families were short of devices or reliable internet. Some families did not feel they had access to the school district to get what they needed. Many families had no idea how to use different devices and applications. More support was needed. Access is hard for some families of students with disabilities as some of the parents also have disabilities and lack the executive functioning to provide what is needed for students along with caring for other children. Instruction was difficult for some parents because communication was lacking. One organization reported that meal access varies greatly from district to district. A theme from community partners was that when parents had to go to multiple places to access food, it became very overwhelming and/or transportation barriers. **Concerns about supports** are about a lack of training, preparation, and consistent expectations. Parameters for distance learning was lacking, there

were not expectations around communication response time, and many teachers lacked self-efficacy around technology platforms. Meeting the mental health needs of staff has been a bigger concern along with meeting the needs of families. It was very difficult to support medically fragile students and their families. School provides a respite for many of these families. ELL students whose parents do not speak English are at a double disadvantage. While devices and hot spots were provided, there was no support for parents on how to use them. Some parents were denied devices. Interpreters are not licensed teachers and sometimes they have to interpret information that they don't understand. Low expectations and lack of rigor was an issue for some parents.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) was most concerned about access to the internet and limitations of broadband for families who cannot afford the extra costs. They are concerned that internet concerns, combined with a lack of structure, parents' inability to assist with school work, and inadequate space at home have resulted in students falling too far behind.

Tribal Nations Education Committee members shared that the inaccessibility of internet services available in close proximity have resulted in delayed planning for distance learning going into the next school year for tribal schools. Without access to broadband, schools and families with students in those schools are unable to participate in distance learning on an equitable basis statewide. Another area of concern is that administrators and educators need a better understanding of special education laws particularly with IEPs and providing more than one way for our students to demonstrate learning. The committee would like for MDE to develop specific language for districts to follow beyond guidance because district administrators do not take the guidance seriously and do not make decisions that benefit all students.

Urban Indian Alliance is most concerned about equitable access to internet, devices, and supplies. They felt many of their students did not have adequate resources to undertake distance learning from the beginning and though they did receive them (supplies like paper and pencil) they were already far behind other students because of the lack of access. The other large concern was how to get these items out to the students via transportation.

Equity in Access:

Early Learning Educators were concerned about English learners and making sure students and families knew how to access the learning materials, engage with the content, and be successful in distance learning. In addition, there was a concern about students' mental health and trauma with leaving the educational setting they were used, and also illness, food insecurity, abuse, and domestic violence. Concern was also expressed for meeting staff needs when they returned to school.

Elementary School Principals (MESPA) agreed that distance learning was **not equitable**, and one principal of color noted that in reality, there is no way that DL can be equitable. This principal notes that we may be able to achieve technical equality (though that seems impossible as well), but that **equity** is not achievable in this environment. This principal also noted that whiteness of the majority of our teachers bumps up against this and that the learning curve for teachers not just in the technical but their own perceptions of what is "right" were a challenge as teachers were allowed into families homes via zoom, etc. The principals also

discussed concern over attendance. It appeared as if there was a lack of understanding on the expectation of accounting relative to attendance. Finally, they said 8 days was just not enough time to make this transition.

Elementary School Teachers were concerned that the current distance learning environment uncovered huge equity gaps between families able to manage learning multiple platforms versus those who struggle to learn even one. This is particularly challenging in non-English speaking households, and household in rural areas where internet connections and broadband services are limited. Established relationships with parents make a difference in how well it goes for some students. One participant said that creating opportunities for parents to learn new ways of educating [online] is, "the pinnacle to the structure of making this distance learning work." The group suggested that all staff need to be trained on one platform and plan ahead.

Secondary School Principals (MASSP) were clear that **access** is what was the issue when it came to **equity** for students. They reiterated the issue of access to *high quality* internet made it difficult for some students to engage, they could not see the videos of instruction. They went on to discuss the merits and concerns about synchronous vs asynchronous learning. They felt asynchronous was likely needed to allow flexibility for students but also some synchronous for relationship building and maintenance. One participant said if we are really going to be **equitable** if we are hybrid in the fall, we need to bring back the kids who NEED school, not the ones who can manage distance learning at home. With regards to **staff** and **equity** they are concerned about those who have their own kids at home vs those who have older or no kids and the workload differences as a result. One principal also mentioned the concern about sending the lowest paid, often marginalized staff, paraprofessionals into the high risk environments by engaging them in home visits while using their own resources to do so (gas). They are most concerned about what they will do if staff *cannot* come back.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 2 participants are concerned about access to internet and broadband for students and families and note how heavily they are intertwined. They were also concerned that Covid has shed light on issues that were already there for low income families who don't have access to services which creates delays and interruptions and more frustration.

The Tribal Nations Education Committee was most concerned about access to and costs for internet and broadband services in rural and tribal communities and how it can be successfully utilized as a connective and instructional tool for K-12 general education and special education students. They are concerned that appropriate supports for special education students are not being provided to students who need them.

The Urban Indian Alliance voiced a unique concern about communication with parents. It was brought up that parents do not have access to the same forms of communication. Some do not have cell phones or social media which places them in a tough position not only to assist their child, but to simply be informed of what is occurring. Attendance tracking was another concern as students that do not have access to devices or acceptable internet cannot log on to be counted. Additionally, those who are working as essential

personnel or as a caretaker may not have the ability to log on and be counted. Lastly, there was a robust discussion surrounding the need for mental health support for marginalized students both in response to civil unrest and the switch to distance learning.

Communication

Elementary School Principals (MESPA) were very concerned with the **lack of interaction** that they had with students. They noted that synchronous was preferable and that **relationships** and **connections** are what made the difference in success. They also noted the **difficulty parents** really had with distance learning as a whole, and that specifically SPED students suffered.

Racial Equity Coordinators were concerned that MDE did not provide sufficient or specific guidance and that led to inconsistent practices and confusion in what was expected from students, families, and teachers. Coordinators think that MDE should provide the specific benchmarks or standards that schools are expected to teach during distance learning. There should also be guidance around grading that is not tied to engagement or attendance.

Equity in Communication:

Tribal Nations Education Committee participants shared their concerns about inequities in daily interactions with schools. Participants observed that schools communicated with families through the Indian Education staff, however there is still a need for teachers to interact daily with students. Some teachers had "hard office hours" and were not available to help students nor did they call students.

Instruction

Minnesota Superintendents (MASA) were most concerned about supports and instruction. Ensuring daily instruction has been challenging for many districts, as well as high-quality engagement with students. Superintendents said that many students of color are not having meaningful interactions with their teachers and the focus has primarily been on “busy work” and worksheets that aren’t meaningful or pertain to them in a culturally relevant way. More planning time provided at the beginning of the school year is needed for staff as educators are exhausted right now. Many districts reported that their staff were having challenges with self-care and mental health. Teachers are worried, and some teachers don’t have reliable internet access.

Charter School Leaders are worried about the loss of kids who are hardest to reach, HHM, SPED, and young children. They echoed trying hard, but that not having them face to face was really hard for their most vulnerable populations. They also said while there may have been “instruction” going on, they are not sure that meant there was “learning”.

Equity in Instruction:

Charter School Leaders were concerned about material resources especially technology devices like laptops and internet service. Many deployed everything they had in their buildings and are worried about them actually coming back and the financial costs associated with that. They also discussed partnerships with their local school districts and other partners, like bus companies, that were positive and helpful in providing equity in food and material delivery.

Secondary School Teachers indicated that current implementation of distance learning instruction is inequitable and has exacerbated already existing gaps. Teachers feel that MDE failed to provide sufficient guidance on how to deliver equitable instruction for students, particularly, students of color. As districts waited for MDE and the governor to provide more guidance, districts and teachers developed their own systems and many fixated on grading rather than learning models and expectations. As a result, grading was highly inequitable and often did not take into account the conditions affecting students' learning and progress. According to secondary teachers, students were not provided the necessary materials to complete assignments which led to additional struggles for students who were already struggling. In addition, teachers indicated that digital literacy was a challenge for both students and teachers. Teachers of color felt that distance learning allowed colleagues and school processes to exclude them even more so than before. Moreover, there was poor communication with parents and many teachers felt they were not responsible for communicating with parents. This group would like for MDE to address concerns about trauma that people are experiencing and SEL for adults and students is needed.

Families in Group 3 believe that distance learning did not meet the unique needs of students and inequities resulted in areas of differentiated instruction, and special education services that were not delivered effectively. In other areas parents observed some children living in poverty who did not have sufficient resources (e.g., materials, supplies, and environment) to complete school activities or assignments. Internet access and device access was variable, which caused some families to take turns completing assignments. This meant that some families did school all day long when they had multiple kids. Also, within family units, learning was dynamic because one child needed more support than other children. Parents enjoyed live instruction from teachers because it allowed questions and feedback to be given in real-time. Families would like schools to be coordinated so that families did not have more than one lunch hour. Some families were managing 3 or more lunch periods because of schedules schools created. In general, when it comes to equitable education, these families felt that schools failed to support families living in poverty.

Supports

Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) indicated many challenges around providing support to students with disabilities and other vulnerable populations. All Directors indicated that a great deal of time is spent providing support to parents. Distance learning has been about supporting parents, getting resources to families, schools operating as a community resource, concerns around equity are also related to equity between disabilities. Issues with Setting 4 programs include families experiencing challenges (lack of a home environment to support DL, schedules, other activities going on in the home, food security).

Many participants indicated having many students who they have been unable to establish contact with. They refer to these students as "lost students." Staff don't know where they are located or if they are okay. Student engagement is challenging for different disability areas. It is very difficult to recreate programming virtually for certain groups of students (severe disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, deaf/blind, mobility), All directors indicated significant challenges providing support to students with disabilities resulting in an increased burden on parents. Access to the internet creates inequity. Equity of instruction is different for students that get live or recorded lessons vs. packets sent home and requiring parents to instruct. Significant issues with more rural and less wealthy counties and internet access.

Families in Greater Minnesota are concerned that in the area of supports, these services are already underfunded and layered on the stressors of Covid-19, makes it unclear how these services can be funded adequately, and particularly how mental health supports can be delivered effectively to staff and students if funding is a limitation. Families are experiencing widespread stress. Children who did not exhibit behavior and emotional distress before are now showing signs of struggle in the current climate.

Families in Metro areas are concerned that distance learning is not meeting the unique needs of kids regardless of their status as part of a vulnerable group. They believe that if a hybrid model is adopted in the fall, but resources are limited, it may be best to prioritize students who are most in need of in-person instruction. For teachers to do their jobs well during distance learning, they will need childcare or modify the requirement for the number of instructional days. Also, encourage teachers to make learning relevant to current events.

Families in Group 2 were concerned about meeting students' mental health and English learning needs. This was much harder during distance learning because some of the same resources (e.g., assistive technology and one-on-one EL instruction) were not available at all or were only minimally available to families during distance learning. Parents had a difficult time, especially with their children who have IEPs because they often struggled receiving one-on-one services virtually instead of in person. Also, some students didn't have someone at home that they felt comfortable sharing their feelings with. Parents also really struggled to be their children's teacher because their children would sometimes tell them something different from what the teacher said and they haven't been trained as teachers themselves--this was true for parents who didn't complete high school and for parents who completed college but have not been trained to be a teacher. In addition, several families that do not speak English fluently struggled because instructions in their native language were limited and all of the learning platforms were in English. In general, families were also concerned about the depression students were feeling from being pulled from an environment in which they thrived and found support. They want there to be more ways for students to connect with their school community and address the depression students are feeling.

Racial Equity Coordinators 2 shared that there has to be flexibility in understanding how and when school gets done because students have different responsibilities that may affect when they can sign on for lessons or submit assignments. The lack of guidance from MDE in grading, attendance, and instruction has led many teachers to equate attendance with engagement in learning and penalizing students who may be unable to attend set meeting times or homework deadlines. The lack in clarity on grading has led

families to compare district practices with neighboring districts. Teachers require more training in how to do distance learning (e.g., technology skills), shifting delivery of instruction (e.g., a need to focus on thinking routines that helps learning to be applicable to students' lives), and building relationships. In the fall, time must be dedicated for teachers to build deep relationships with their students, and training needs to take place to support teachers in learning to develop deep relationships with students.

Equity in Supports:

Racial Equity Coordinators indicated that the district experienced push-back from parents and teachers when changes were made to the grading policy in shifting from a letter grade to pass-fail, and then to pass-all. Families and teachers felt that letter grades were warrant to showcase the level of work that was being performed. There needs to be guidance on grading. Also, we need to ensure that students, families and teachers have the materials and supports needed in order to be successful.

Racial Equity Coordinators 2 believe it is important for MDE and schools need to acknowledge the trauma that students and families are experiencing. There is trauma in both COVID and current events with George Floyd. Inequity in education existed before COVID, but with distance learning those inequities are more prominent. There is a need to focus on trauma-informed practices that is asset-based because so many current models are deficit-based. These supports need to be in place before learning can happen. That means that teachers will need professional development around trauma-informed practices and relationship building to understand how their beliefs and racial socialization is affecting their teaching.

What do you want MDE to know as they develop future guidance for districts to support distance learning in schools?

Charter School Leaders had three distinct themes in this question on what they want MDE to know as they develop guidance. First, they want ***better communication and sooner***. They expressed frustration in their words and tone of voice at the communication being delayed and not specific. Later in the session one said charters are often under more scrutiny for "following the rules" than districts, so they do, and then when their local district does not, it is challenging, so better communication would be helpful. The second theme they had was around ***emergency childcare***. They appreciated being able to use special education funding, but often it was not enough, they had to pay hazard pay to get people, and their budget could sustain it this year but not next, one tied this back to communication and wanting to know now, so she can budget accordingly. The final area they are wanting to share feedback on is ***transportation***. They feel there is not enough guidance on it yet and are worried about that.

Early Learning Educators want MDE to be aware that requirements may be difficult to follow given the distance learning situation. For example, pathway scholarships may not be able to be fully utilized because with lower enrollments there may not be enough children that qualify. Some programs cannot serve any students because they are not allowed to be in district buildings where they were before. One recommendation is to serve high school students via distance learning technology and the younger students face-to-

face. In addition, the more time MDE can give schools to plan, the better off the final product will be across all age groups served because each scenario requires a unique plan and schools are complex systems. Early learning educators are also concerned about how distance learning will go when a relationship with families has not already been established. More flexibility might be needed to adjust to the constraints of distance learning or a hybrid model. Another recommendation was to look at a family-oriented model rather than a grade level-oriented model--what would it look like to orient the plans around the needs of a whole family?

Minnesota Administrators of Special Education (MASE) believe that timely communication is needed from MDE. Specific guidance, flow charts, or decision-making rules are needed when deciding which students can't be included in the hybrid model. Programming guidance is needed for students with severe disabilities. Could MDE state specialists help with programming guidance? Could MDE hold forums for SPED Directors that would provide answers that are more conversational in nature rather than a Q/A list? Guidance on conducting evaluations during distance learning. Paperwork reduction for increased IEP meetings due to distance learning. Guidance from MDE regarding finance requirements for putting programming into place, leveraging funding, and allowable expenses. Assurance from compliance and assistance that they will operate from an assumption that districts are doing their best, recognize the challenges districts are under, and provide flexibility when needed. MDE to convene a group of SPED directors to develop questions, concerns, and resources. Consider categories of Models, Staffing, Attendance, screening of health, behaviors, PPE, positive cases of COVID-19, general category. Bulk purchasing of common items by MDE for districts.

Minnesota Superintendents (MASA) would like MDE to continue thinking about 1,080 hours of instruction. The biggest concern is that there will need to be flexibility around standards based instruction. Many districts are currently using other state plans as examples. The pace that is needed to cover content is not reasonable. Instruction will need to be structured based on what students need rather than teaching standards assessed on MCA. Secondary course offerings will need to be scaled back. How can MDE provide ways to be on the same page for power standards and high-leverage standards? What support can MDE provide with flexibility and helping teachers understand and prioritize the standards? Many districts have surveyed families and the hybrid model is frightening to many parents because they are returning to work and do not know what to do with their children. Providing school-age care is challenging due to the space that would be needed. One large metro district surveyed 500 families about whether preference for schooling in the Fall. The data indicated that 50% of families would choose to keep their children home. Many concerns about teacher retention also exist. They believe that staff are exhausted and do not know if they can physically and mentally continue with distance learning next year. Academics is taking a back seat to SEL. Parents are breaking down due to stress. In addition, there were many concerns around PPE especially with students who do a lot of self-harm, aggressive behaviors, and transmit bodily fluid to staff.

Elementary School Principals' (MESPA) responses were largely tied to time. They felt that the 8 days that districts had to respond was not nearly enough time to prepare. They also felt that the other things that traditionally take up time needed to be taken off the table, like standards work, reflecting the secondary principals sentiments about the science standards, and they felt that time for professional development this summer would be needed. Finally the use of instructors and their time was mentioned specific to

"specialists" (art, music, PE). They suggested that MDE loosen requirements in these areas, perhaps offer them as enrichment, but allow these licensed teachers to be helpful in other ways.

Elementary School Teachers indicated that Covid-19 changed education and social emotional needs of students. According to these teachers, educational approaches going forward need to focus on training and teaching to the whole person, heart, mind, body, and spirit to provide equity and social emotional that students and families need. Another need is to streamline technology so that everyone is using the same platform to reduce challenges and stressors that students, families and teachers experience with learning multiple applications for distance learning.

Secondary School Teachers believe there are differences in distance learning experiences between big and small districts, and inequities experienced in urban settings are not the same as those occurring in rural communities. These teachers believe that any mandate presented by MDE needs to offer flexibility that allows districts to consider their local environment and population. Still, teachers recommend that MDE explicitly identify core standards expected of across the state that all students must know. This may lead to identifying core courses or content areas. It will be important for MDE to maintain PE/health as a core content area since movement is vital to SEL and distance learning. As school move forward with distance learning, there is a need to teach and train teachers, students and parents how to effectively engage in online learning.

Minnesota Rural Educators Association (MREA) participants were concerned there is a lack of student to student interaction that impacts mental health. Students need a way to interact with each other. Some teachers have been told they cannot use Seesaw for students to interact with each other due to confidentiality. Local control continues to be important. Guidance can be developed, but there needs to be a framework with independence and local control. The number of COVID-19 cases in each county should drive decision-making. Many districts are concerned about losing students next year impacting funding. Since many students see school as a way to have social interaction, there is concern that more students will be kept at home and that many 11th and 12th graders will do online PSEO. There are many concerns about whether the state has data from parents to find out approximately how many parents will send students to school in the fall given each scenario.

Community Education Directors were concerned with attending to funding stream issues. If programs aren't charging a fee then they need another revenue stream to pay staff providing the care. It's also important to make sure that qualified staff are providing care. There is concern that in the fall, families will not enroll in preschool, for example, because it might be done via distance learning. Currently community education is a trusted resource for families looking for care for their children, but the limitations on how community education can provide care moving forward has the potential to leave families underserved and with no place to go. Another idea was to change the school calendar year to October-June so that there is more time to plan and get a vaccine so that students and staff are safer. What other adjustments might be made in terms of making requirements more flexible (e.g., minimizing days) to support schools? Lastly, they shared that there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes that families or MDE don't see, which means that schools and programs need ample time to adjust and plan.

Racial Equity Coordinators think that guidance from MDE needs to be specific and explicit. Guidance needs to include expectations of equity and include processes in place that hold districts and teachers accountable for distance learning that meets the needs of all students.

Racial Equity Coordinators 2 think that budget cuts may occur because of the situation, but it will be difficult to maintain equity efforts with fewer staff. Districts may need to think about repurposing staff. There is a need to prioritize expectations and training. Some suggested areas include Relationship building, professional development on trauma informed strategies (asset focused), e-learning vs distance learning, Thinking routines, standards based grading and how it relates to deep learning, and using data that has been gathered so honor the time people have given. Clear expectations are needed around grading with an emphasis on standards based grading.

Families in Greater Minnesota are mixed about having their children return to school in the fall versus keeping them home for instruction. Some are worried about the social aspects of keeping kids at home, while others are worried about how schools will be able to ensure children's' safety, especially children with compromised health. Perhaps hybrid models or prioritizing students who are making transition milestones (e.g., middle school) for in-person instruction should be considered. Nonetheless, parents are hopeful that MDE will make a decision prior to August so that families have time to prepare emotionally for the new school routines.

Families in Metro areas believe that teachers and schools need to provide clear communication on the learning that is expected of students. Communication between teachers and parents also need to be strengthened. Parent resources, whether that's instructional video modeling, social support or cheat sheets, are needed in order for parents to support their children's learning. Teachers need more training in the technology they are using.

Families in Group 2 would like to have a catch up day every week to keep students from falling behind and give them more time to get extra help. Accountability and attendance was a component that families struggled with because their kids would sometimes tell them they had completed something or followed the teacher's instructions but then they would get communication from the teacher that the student hadn't. This made it hard for parents to hold their kids accountable. So, they would like a way to verify for themselves what their kids had done. Also, families would like to have a school staff member or another family or student they can reach out to in their native language to communicate with and to access information that they need to be a part of the community. Families with multiple children in different grade levels would also prefer if the same learning platform would be used consistently so they only have to learn to navigate 1 system. Given the tight turnaround to distance learning, though, families felt like schools generally did a good job and were very creative in handling this tough situation. Families also felt like there needed to be an IEP for each student in the school to make sure that their needs were being met because each family may have felt that this spring there was a need not being met, whether it was food, technology, or rigor.

Families in Group 3 would like for schools to provide more live instruction and instructional materials if students are required to use materials to complete assignments. Parents are also concerned that SEL is missing in distance learning and that students are not gaining social interaction with peers that they need to grow. In addition, they are not receiving instruction on digital citizenship as they work in these online environments. These parents would like for schools to build in structured groups (e.g., advisory) so that students gain opportunities to interact with their peers. Mental health concerns also need to be addressed as students manage their anxiety during this time or cope with family members and neighbors contracting Covid. Schools need to focus on SEL in the fall to rebuild community again so that learning can take place.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) would like for transportation to be set up like it would be in a regular school year and then adjusted as needed. A bus driver in this group felt that by driving a regular route with stops the system will be fully functioning and rerouted schedule will not be necessary. The bus drivers were also concerned about timelines for bidding for their bus routes, and protective PPE. The future employment and safety for paraprofessionals was a concern for members of this discussion group.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 1 participants want to ensure MDE provides space for students and staff decompression. Safety was also discussed thoroughly as a top priority by participants as they want MDE to fully consider it in their decision as well as take into consideration what a vaccine would mean for families that opt out, yet send their children to in-person instruction. Finances/monetary support was also highlighted in the needs of supporting schools through extra staff and how to supplement in the event some families opt out of in-person instruction to join online institutions.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 3 indicates that **c**lear and consistent communication is needed from MDE at the earliest point possible. Many staff and families are stressed about waiting until late July to hear the next steps. Districts would like earlier decisions even if the decision has to be retracted later. Districts need more intentional support to guide implementation. Districts need training and support if distance learning continues next school year. Several organizations expressed concern about the lack of direct instruction for students with disabilities. Pre-recorded videos would be better than worksheets. Lack of consistency within districts has been problematic. Community partnership supports have been lacking. Schools try to do it all on their own when community partners could assist with parent communication. Communication around attendance is needed for parents from districts or MDE. Several parents indicated being highly anxious about the district pursuing truancy or educational neglect for attendance. It is important to have diversity at the decision-making table, school districts are making assumptions without voices at the table. Good intentions are not good substitutes for diversity within decision-making.

Urban Indian Alliance participants want MDE to consider the impact of a single device in a multi-student home and how that can impact learning, attendance, etc. Additionally, they would like MDE to be mindful of the current atmosphere allowing students additional time to complete assignments and possibly re-evaluating grades altogether if they intend to keep curriculum the same. In contrast, participants offered that MDE could consider creating a curriculum that is more relevant to everyday life (i.e. math skills for

daily life versus algebra). Participants are also concerned about how to get students engaged and participating in distance learning hopefully without having to go to an incentives model, but considering that as a possibility.

Feedback on Operational Guidelines

Minnesota Superintendents (MASA) said that districts need examples of staffing models to support the recommendations and need flexibility on how to use staff. For example, it would be helpful to be able to use staff flexibly to do health checks rather than health aides. Decision trees or flow charts are needed to think about individual needs of students. What is at the end of the decision tree if there are not ways to follow the health guidelines? Consider expanding the staff to student ratio to 1:12 or 1:15. Use current data to make recommendations in the fall since recommendations change weekly. Additional guidance is needed around staggering start times. What does that mean for bussing? More guidance is needed on interpreting guidance around alternating days, groups of kids. Clear guidance on the use of cloth masks with students and staff. Cloth masks are very difficult for young children (and adults). And resources are often limited. How will districts finance additional staff needed? Transportation workforce may become an issue as many bus drivers have other jobs and won't be available for staggered routes. Districts may have to purchase more vehicles to transport some students individually. Guidance on use of long-term facility maintenance dollars. Clear guidance from MDE on how to pay for things, especially smaller districts. Districts are being deluged by vendors trying to sell Plexiglas and PPE's. Could MDE come up with a systematic say to assist districts like bulk purchasing? Districts close to state borders are worried that students will transfer across state lines depending on the rules of each state.

Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) want clear guidance from MDE and Public Health. Directors expressed concerns over sifting through the guidance (CDC and MPH). Could we have one set of guidance to rely on (preferably MPH)? Social distancing is challenging especially with students who see multiple providers during the day. How to serve students when space was already challenging before COVID-19? Smaller schools do not have enough health resources and training on PPE. Could there be a statewide webinar on health guidelines? Clear guidance is needed from MDE on checklist of things districts should be doing now in preparation for fall. Example: Measuring rooms, staffing requirements for cleaning, which staff are in an at-risk population? Staff members with issues of age? Guidance of what to be working on right now. Ordering PPE - when to order, where to order from? Or MDE becoming the central point of access for purchasing and discount for large volume. Guidance in terms of refusals from staff to comply or students to comply? Ex: people who think Covid is fake news, and won't comply with guidelines. What will guidance be for these situations? Know as early as possible of MDE guidance for schools for the Fall - recommended recipe or cookbook for what should be done. Will teachers have to deliver instruction both face-to-face and distance learning (for kids who aren't face-to face, with staggered days). Emergency child care - use this as a base for determine what works well and problem areas.

Charter School Leaders want **flexibility** and scenarios in how to accomplish some of this. They are worried about losing kids to Districts because of their small school space.

Early Learning Educators believe there needs to be flexibility with the numbers of hours and days of service to accommodate small group sizes. It is also going to be hard to have kids keep masks on and keep them 6ft apart. Following the guidance will be difficult because it goes against best practice in early childhood education, which means it feels wrong and begs the question: What is the balance between students' physical health and their mental health/development? In addition, how should schools handle situations in which the school staff are trying to follow guidelines but the families say they will not. There are also concerns about needing more funding to support following the CDC/MDH guidelines and worry that there will be a staff shortage if staff get sick.

Elementary School Principals (MESPA) are very concerned about the guidelines that are presented. They want specifics and scenarios on how to do this. They are also very concerned about the financial cost of these guidelines.

Elementary School Teachers discussed what was possible for implementing the operational guidelines. Their concerns focused on the additional number of staff that would be required to sanitize areas to keep students and staff safe, as well as additional staff to support the staff ratio recommendation. One participant had experience recently as an essential worker in an elementary school for three months with K-7th grade working with the 1:9 ratio. According to the participant, these operations were doable. The participant said,

> "Kindergarten is more challenging, but if you station them apart, they do stay at their computer and do their work. It's when it's playtime, like we took them outside every day for recess. That was a little bit more challenging, trying to keep the distance. Once you just staggered home and you had their places set and they knew where they had to be after the first week. Kids adapt to it. The problem is it's getting us to adapt to it us to follow it as well, because it's hard. It's learning to give elbow hugs instead of body hugs. I mean, there's a lot of things that we can do to change that. It is difficult. But those kindergarten first grade kids need a lot of that because they do need the nurturing. But just having them there made such a big difference. Just being back to the school building, these kids were just nothing but smiles because that's their normal year. So it's doable. The problem is having enough staff to be able to facilitate that. We didn't have any teachers in the building because we followed the teacher curriculum on the computer. So it was just getting the kids on the computer and helping them facilitate through that. It's doable. Kids need it. I don't know. Like I said, having the staff in the right place at the right time and then we just had to clean everything and what kids couldn't touch. We had wrapped in paper over the top. So if we needed a manipulative to teach that lesson that day, it had to be cleaned when we were done. So nothing can get put away until everything was cleaned at the end."

Secondary School Teachers believe that implementing these practices will require a team effort, which may require making contractual changes. They pointed out that many logistical things that need to be addressed such as identifying personnel responsible for completing health checks and sanitizing efforts, how to create schedules that allow 1:9 ratios, how to address substitute shortages, and what to do with high-risk staff. They suggested that MDE consider offering a menu of options based on student population and allow flexibility in the guidelines so that different school settings and districts appropriately address populations and environments and the changing nature of situations. There are major concerns about whether these measures can realistically be implemented or enforced. There are concerns that a lack of enforcement in certain measures (e.g., social distancing, wearing masks) may cause a health crisis, particularly because some students do not have a real understanding of the consequences of COVID-19.

Secondary School Principals had differing opinions on this -they both want clear and concrete guidance and yet the flexibility to decide what is right in their geographic area. This seems mainly to focus on the fact that not all parts of the state have the same exposure to COVID-19. They would like MDE to provide scenarios of what a response to this guidance may look like, and hope that MDE notes that if we are going to be equitable, not all kids can get the same. They suggested support from the other government entities in their locals like county or healthcare centers to help with planning in the schools.

Minnesota Rural Educators Association (MREA) participants are concerned about financial support that will be needed to implement all of the guidance (staffing, custodial, transportation, PPE). Expecting districts to obtain financial resources through levies is unreasonable given current economic situation. Districts are getting bombarded by vendors to purchase PPE and disinfectants. They would like MDE to provide a list of vendors with "research-based" products and assist with bulk purchasing. One superintendent had a vendor try to sell a disinfectant "fogger" that later turned out to be unsafe. Districts are concerned about health guidance matching the stage/phase the state is in as things change so rapidly.

Community Education Directors talked about how their summer programs can serve as a pilot for how to follow the guidance. They are already doing these things and can inform adjustments for the fall. For early childhood, there is a concern about the ways in which masks and staying 6ft apart make it harder for kids to socialize which is especially critical in that developmental stage. This is especially true for students with special needs and sensory issues. Financial concerns were raised again here about how to compensate for fewer students being enrolled. In addition concerns about contact tracing and quarantining if a staff member or student contracts ovid-19. How should that be handled? Finally, there was a concern about water fountains raised in an MDH call regarding whether restricting water fountains to only have the bottle filler available will violate a fire code for schools and how they should handle that situation. They want to make sure that MDH and MDE are on the same page about concerns like this.

Racial Equity Coordinators say that districts are going to need financial support and MOUs related to teacher contracts. There will need to be extensive training on how to implement these practices so that sanitation regiments are effective and everyone can be safe. Any kind of guidance from MDE needs to be delivered soon because July is too late.

Racial Equity Coordinators 2 are concerned there have been major variations in distance learning implementation across districts, which is causing families to question the different models. The group recommends that MDE develop a framework that outlines specific parameters but allows districts sufficient autonomy so that districts can tailor services to meet the needs of their students and families. If going back to school in the fall, there will need to be intentional efforts on ensuring consistent enforcement of rules, which includes training staff to be aware of their unconscious bias. Furthermore, it is not recommended that schools dive into academics right away in the fall. The first several weeks should be dedicated to SEL and community building, but MDE needs to provide specific recommendations on that and guidance which can give districts permission to set aside academics and testing for the moment, but also prioritize power standards. As part of SEL, districts will need to address cyberbullying and digital citizenship and needs MDE's support in establishing these guidelines.

Families in Greater Minnesota see challenges with hiring staff such as counselors and nurses, but staff like these may be needed to support health measures. Families believe that staff can help students cope, dispel myths, and give them a chance to talk their experiences. Families would like for schools to focus on mental health and SEL components in the fall before diving into academics. Parents were relieved to know that standardized tests were put on hold for this academic year, and thought testing should be put on hold again so that resources and time can be dedicated to other needs. Framing the rules for students need to be tailored for age groups and developmentally appropriate. Parents shared that when they discussed COVID in the context of some things families did pre- COVID helped children make better connections measures currently in place. Parents would like to see an overhaul of the education system and to have measures implemented that are good for kids, not just good for COVID.

Families in Metro areas are concerned that the CDC and MDH guidelines cannot be fully implemented. According to families, it school need to prioritize those kids who are most in need of in-person instruction. If MDE moves forward with a hybrid model, it needs to consider many factors that affect families in being able to attend school (e.g., single parents, multiple kids in the district, before and after school care).

Families in Group 2 said the CDC and MDH guidance made them nervous about sending their kids back to school. They also worry that students/families won't comply with the guidance, especially because some don't think that Covid-19 is worse than the flu. Also with younger children, it is hard to keep them from getting close and interacting with each other. For families whose children have health challenges (such as asthma) they are very concerned about sending their children to school and may choose to not do so until there is a vaccine. Families like the idea of having both in-person and distance learning options to choose from. That being said, families do see the guidance as a learning opportunity for teachers to explicitly teach students how to take care of themselves and others in a pandemic. Teaching children to follow these guidelines won't be easy, but families think their children will adjust.

Families in Group 3 have mixed feelings about students going back to school in the fall. Although there are safety concerns, some parents would prefer that their children are in school in order to gain the social aspects that support children's mental health.

Meanwhile, some families are concerned that it would do more harm because the restrictive guidelines will change the experience of school and it would be extremely difficult to enforce the rules for young and older children. Some are concerned about children spreading Covid and others are concerned about children with compromised immune systems. Perhaps districts can offer both in-person and DL instruction so that parents who are comfortable sending their children to school can and those who are uncomfortable can stream in for instruction. The most important piece is that parents would like a voice and choice in the decision and for MDE and schools to acknowledge their partnership in education. These families believe that MDE should also consider setting aside annual yearly progress because the current climate is not appropriate for examining that progress.

The **Distance Learning Advisory Team 1** posed a number of questions they are concerned about in meeting the regulations and support to meet them. Questions like how can we get kids to school on buses and follow the guidelines or will there be additional money for additional staff to assist? There were also spatial concerns like lack of air conditioning with masks, small bathroom entrance doors, and space in general. Equally concerning to this group is how will MDE interpret the number of hours students spend in schools against the current requirement.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 2 suggested that younger kids probably need more of that face to face teacher interaction. However, could MDE look at utilizing middle and high schools differently to spread out some of the K-6 students and then look at distance learning for 7th-12th grade. Perhaps online would be more appropriate for older students and relocating some younger grades to other buildings could help maintain safe distances in buildings for younger students.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 3 concerns about guidance include recommendations and examples from MDE are needed on how to carry out guidance. Guidance is needed about mask requirements for students. Decision-making rules or flow charts are needed from MDE on how to decide which students need more face to face than distance learning. Many concerns about parents who are anxious about sending their students back to school. This group encouraged MDE to keep distance learning as an option. MDE is encouraged to continue requiring access to meals if students are out of the building. Provide recommendations on increasing public health nurses in districts that don't have them.

Urban Indian Alliance participants' focus was on the difficulty following the guidelines due to a lack of staff and finances as they felt much of this would have to occur outside of the school space because the physical building is not big enough to accomplish some of these guidelines. In taking activities and learning outside (something the participants were willing and excited to explore) having and creating safe spaces for the students was the predominant message.

Legislative Policy Adjustments Needed to Support School Districts and Charter Schools

Early Learning Educators hope that the legislature recognizes the value of supporting early childhood education and how much equity work has been done in that area over time. That support is needed now especially in order to support families in the current environment. They also want to stress that following CDC/MDH guidance would take a lot more people and money. Where will the staff and funding come from? Early learning educators also voiced concerns about assessment of kids and how to meet the requirements of voluntary pre-K and pathways. They would like clear guidance on how to address the requirements.
Charter Leaders would like there to be continued flexibility with special education funding and they would like some template language from MDE that they can use with authorizers, in contracts with providers, right now. They recognize they are small and want to keep the focus on students and families and would welcome guidance and suggested language to help with contracts. They also suggested the possibility of COVID testing on site for students and staff.

Minnesota Superintendents (MASA) would like to see alignment of new mandates with funding with a focus on increasing the base adjusting for inflation including provisions for ELL and SPED cross-subsidy. They would like MDE to consider extending two grants for staff development and mental health for students with high needs. They also would like flexibility with use of special education funded staff, student hours and courses to meet the needs of students, attendance, calendars for more professional development and curriculum development, teacher observations and evaluations, meal deliveries (when calendar year runs out, won't be able to do meal delivery. Won't qualify.). Information on early and clear guidance on whether districts will continue with mandated childcare as more businesses open is needed. And a waiver for World's Best Workforce Requirements for one year is needed to allow schools to focus on students and families.

Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) recommend that MDE consider review of due process procedures to see where changes would be needed for distance learning. What do districts do if they can't uphold the Health Guidelines? Prior written notice? What if parents deny? The also recommend clear guidance around compensatory services. Consider revising "aging out of services." Many students "aged out" this school year, but are in need of compensatory services. Distance learning does not work for all students resulting in some students not engaging. Modify rules around dropping students after 15 days? Funding issues result when students are dropped.

Elementary School Principals (MESPA) are concerned about how **student contact time** is calculated and if that needs to be changed in this environment. They are also concerned about the **Oct 1 Count date**, that some will show up after that because of the spike that is expected to come in COVID-19 at that time. They are worried about funding for food service, because in reality they are feeding entire families and worried about funding of childcare and how they will provide it when parents are back to work. They wondered about teacher contracts and realized they are locally agreed upon contracts, though would like guidance from the state.

Community Education Directors raised the need to open up and extend funding streams to have access to screening children within 90 days to determine if there is an early intervention need. This is challenging to do right now but needs to be a possibility to best support families. Requirements for teacher-student contact may also need to be lessened in order to accommodate for the challenges of distance learning. They also thought that MDE fell short on recognizing that community education could fill gaps in care (particularly around social-emotional support) that resulted from the shift to distance learning for districts. Time was again raised as an issue. The more time programs have to plan the better. For example, if they knew they would have been able to have 25 kids in a summer program earlier then many programs likely would not have canceled service altogether. In addition there is a concern about staffing--who is at risk and who should have to work? They felt there is a lot of conversation around this but little specific guidance on what to do (What paperwork is needed? How should this be handled in HR?). There was also a comment about how legislative language may be changed to consider not just the academic part of students' lives but their whole life that might help make continuity in the child's life and family support more possible.

Transportation Guidelines

Minnesota Superintendents (MASA) are trusting that guidance from MDE will change as the dial turns. Currently, the transportation guidelines are very troublesome for districts.

Transportation Stakeholders were concerned about how the guidance could be implemented. Health screening for example, would there be another adult to do that? Would the adult be from the school or the transportation company? They think it would be too much to have bus drivers do this as they are also doing what they need to do to keep kids safe. Another concern is about increasing the number of routes and how that would be paid for in the district. Is MDE going to provide more funds? Also, having 1 row between students and 1 student per seat reduces capacity from 77 to 10 which is a dramatic change. The YMCA this summer has made some adjustments so that capacity is about 24. The YMCA could serve as a pilot example for how districts could meet such guidelines--they are also taking staff temperatures daily, having them wear masks, and having them fill out a health questionnaire for additional precautions. Cleaning handrails and seats is something that is already done. Lastly, there are questions about staff to help monitor students waiting for transportation and how guidance may vary if exposure time is minimal. For example, a participant said: "if you have an apartment building with 30 children, can you use one bus for that if the students are only on the bus for 10 minutes?"

Training drivers is already a regular part of the transportation leaders' work as they prepare for the school year. So, training is not a concern. Their concern is about timing and making sure that the information drivers need to know is provided in enough time to plan and implement appropriately. With the training, it may also be important to include details on how bus drivers are to interact with students. Sometimes students get sick on busses and there are fluids. Bus drivers are used to being able to take care of kids in that situation and it may be hard for them to not do so in the same ways as they would have previously. There also need to be actions drivers can take in the moment to address disciplinary issues on the busses as needed. They are uncertain about how

guidance could be met and kids could be kept safe without having a 2nd adult on the bus. Transportation leaders have also been sending out information about guidance already so their drivers become familiar with the terminology and what the guidance entails. There also needs to be specific and clear instructions sent out because what has been shared to date is vague.

General education bussing vs. special education. Transportation leaders were generally less concerned about bussing for special education students because the number of students is less and usually there is another adult on the bus. Their concerns are really focused on general education and the uncertainty of how many students might show up to be bussed. What if 12 students show up and there is only capacity for 10? Also, what if there are no parents at home at that point, what should be done with those kids? There needs to be more clear direction on that piece.

What did we miss?

Charter School Leaders shared differences in understanding about attendance and would like MDE to provide clarification. One felt MPS was given the time to distribute devices and "count kids present" when they were not. They also discussed to communication and guidance and said that MDE was too "loosey goosey" in their guidance and wanted definitive and clear guidance - they again cited graduation as problematic in the guidance.

Early Learning Educators discussed the importance of "access to technology, access to someone who can help parents through the use of technology, and also not only for their language and culture, but also just for there to be able to support their children." If access isn't there then all of the other categories are hard to address. They talked about the importance of pulling back when families have too much stress on their plate and education is not the priority (e.g., if a whole family gets sick with covid-19). Another important consideration for this group was how to make distance learning hands on. Also regularly connecting with families and tracking attendance was challenging--some families could connect more frequently than others. It would have been helpful to have clear guidance on attendance, for example, but also the flexibility not to be punished for not meeting the requirement. Differences in how comfortable staff are varies as well, which can be challenging for consistency. This was an equity issue but something early learning leaders felt responsible for and will do more training before the fall to address this. One powerful statement that one leader made and others agreed with was "It is nearly impossible to build an equity system on top of a foundation that's full of inequity." This was a call to focus on educational equity beyond distance learning and to acknowledge equity in distance learning is difficult. Accessing supplies, such as hand sanitizer and gloves, is also very challenging right now. Furthermore, a hybrid model would require educational materials at home and at school, which is more expensive. They also feel that the lessons they are learning in distance learning are important to carry forward when schools reopen because many of the same equity concerns apply then.

Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) were concerned about staff. Many teachers also have school age children at home. The biggest worry is that, if we continue with a hybrid model, how will staff educate and care for their own children. Providing flexibility to employees about when they get their work completed to balance caring for children. What to do with staff that

are high-risk (underlying conditions, age, etc.)? Examples of flexible staffing models will we be facing a staffing shortage due to teachers not wanting to continue with distance learning?

Minnesota Superintendents (MASA) indicate that human resource departments may need more support. Human Resource departments have had to make many adjustments (open enrollment, contract negotiations, leave requests) and may need more support. The group hopes that MPH will take into consideration that CDC guidelines are from a national lens and advocate how to realistically open schools safely.

Secondary School Principals (MASSP) are worried about grading and feel some of these decisions need to be made at the state level for this time and communicated earlier, they were really disappointed in the graduation decision coming so late and then felt like when the Governor allowed gatherings of 250+ outdoors on June 1 that they were left having done a tremendous amount of work to meet the guideline, that was changed. The concern about how the massive gaps that are going to be present post distance learning is worrying principals. They would like flexibility in "what constitutes a credit" in terms of days/hours.

Elementary School Principals (MESPA) are worried about tactical things like grading and how to situate outdoor learning and also instructional things like how to have inquiry lessons and not just "box checking" or "choice boards" that are a ton of busy work. A final area of feedback is to think seriously about the "calendar" that we may need to pause every 15 days to reflect and improve before adding more. They describe a continuous improvement type cycle.

Minnesota Rural Educators Association (MREA) would like to highlight there are there are many concerns about childcare if a full distance learning or hybrid approach is used.

Elementary School Teachers stressed the importance of starting now to figure out what staff will be needed and to start training early. In this new pandemic era these teachers feel that it doesn't make sense to start school and then pull all paras in for a day to train them. Instead, all teachers and staff need to be trained in the first two months. Will there be substitute teachers that need training?

Community Education Directors commented that it is scary to not get guidance until 7/15-7/30. They fear they will not have enough time for adequate planning. They are doing scenario planning but still feel very nervous about the timeline. They would like more clarity on the rights staff have if they don't feel comfortable to come to work. Early intervention work needs to be a possibility to provide the essential care that kids need. In addition, generally, how can there be more flexibility to accommodate for the challenges of distance learning? How can this work be re-imagined? Could funds be floated longer, such as over the summer? How could timelines be adjusted? Holding families through crisis like this requires flexibility and resources. Also, how can children's wellbeing be a focus--how can programs help address students' anxiety? There is also a need for more consistency in the guidance that is conveyed to schools and community education programs--leaders in different areas are at times getting conflicting information, which means a lot of time is spent on fact-finding than perhaps necessary. They would like to know who to contact with questions. Finally, the group

shared that there is a lot of expertise and energy in community education to engage in problem solving around distance learning. They want to be a part of the problem solving process and feel they are uniquely positioned to do so because they are used to responding quickly and efficiently to community needs.

Racial Equity Coordinators 2 would like to see guidance on what priorities to focus on and for MDE to, perhaps, develop different models/frameworks of how school should look in the fall so that there is some level of consistency across districts and the state. This would help to reduce some anxiety and not have families pitting districts against one another. However, guidance needs to come out sooner than the rumored timeline of July. It's OK to present guidelines now with what is known and communicate that the situation is fluid and may change as more information becomes available. Nonetheless, the current climate provides an opportunity for educators to do school differently and to develop a framework that can support all students' success.

Families in Greater Minnesota say that distance learning has been stressful for both students and families, and they are concerned about the level of learning that is taken place. Some families believe that their kids are going backwards and have not seen differentiated instruction. Parents need resources to help their children connect the big ideas to learning, and to better understand assignments, instructional methods, and correct answers. For families using paper packets, it would be helpful if schools organized assignments in the order that they need to be completed so that parents do not have to spend hours trying to figure out the sequence. The stress has made some parents feel like quitting at times. During this time, children have not reacted to parents teaching the same way they would respond in a school setting to their teachers. Parents responded to meltdowns on a daily basis, which caused some parents to lower expectations or identify activities that worked best for their family. Parents appreciated the planning time that was given to parents and teachers when making the decision to implement distance learning in response to Covid. If a decision is made for the fall, most parents would like to be notified at the latest by August 1to prepare appropriately.

Families in Metro areas request a solid plan for distance learning if it is to continue in the fall. They do not want a bigger achievement gap created so a plan needs to be in place to meet students' needs, which may need to include extra curricula. These families indicated they need more support to help their children succeed in school via distance learning.

Families in Group 2 feel it's important to recognize the barriers that have been created by distance learning, but also the barriers that were there before and have been amplified. Schools need to continue to find ways to break barriers and provide supports to prepare kids with the education they need. Along these lines, how can the state get the funding to schools that need it? Families also care about teachers and want to make sure that teachers are given the time and support they need to do what they know best and meet students' needs in distance learning. Lastly, families would like the option of distance learning for their kids to continue. One parent was considering homebound education but feels that distance learning actually provided better learning opportunities than homebound education would. Keeping distance learning as an option would be a valuable opportunity for students who are immunocompromised but also for students who like it and are more independent/accountable in terms of their schoolwork.

Families in Group 3 support relationship building and hope that MDE considers starting school earlier to provide more time to develop relationships. If MDE is to continue distance learning, there needs to be a learning platform that can support all of the necessary instructional components that can handle the high traffic without crashing. They would like for MDE and schools to develop parent resources and identify a contact person in addition to a child's teacher. Schools need to work on the delivery of special education services because instruction is not translating well in a virtual setting. With children's unique needs not being met, it has pushed parents to be advocates for their children, but this creates concerns for children whose parents do not have the resources or capabilities to advocate for their children. To continue with distance learning is also leading parents to wonder if they should choose to home school in order to meet their children's needs without the limitations of schools.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) made a suggestion that teachers change classrooms instead of students to reduce the level of movement in buildings. Another recommendation was lunch in classrooms to reduce movement and additional need to sanitize areas. With new standards for sanitation additional custodial staff will need to be hired in addition to more paraprofessionals to assist with teaching small classes. The group also agreed that distance learning will look different for different age groups. For example, some high school students may do fine with distance learning classes working from home, while others will not. A combination of class time, clear expectations, and consistency will be important for students.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 1 participants want to make sure that students and parents are a part of the feedback groups. They also want to ensure that MDE thoroughly investigates where money needs to go as they believe some districts are privileged in one area, but not in another and do not want to use a blanket funding model that may not target where the money should go.

Distance Learning Advisory Team 2 participants recommend that an equity study be conducted on distance learning returning to school site plans to ensure that vulnerable groups of students and higher needs students are not placed at greater risk by returning to school.

Transportation Stakeholders expressed a need for a clear funding mechanism and how it will work in different situations as well as how loading situations at school and at bus stops will be handled (who is responsible for keeping students 6ft apart). Another concern related to vans that transport students to school (type 3). What guidance do those transportation formats need to follow? They are also concerned about compromised health students (e.g., those with asthma) and sensitivities they might have to the cleaning products. They worry about the safety of those students and how the guidance might address those concerns. One request they have for MDE is to designate an individual who transportation leaders can reach out to with questions they have that are not covered in the guidance or other policies. A regular point of contact to work through concerns with would be really helpful. They also suggested making a video or finding other ways to make sure that information is consistently shared across transportation providers. An additional concern is about the predominantly elderly population of drivers who are choosing to no longer drive because they are at greater risk for Covid-19. Staffing will be challenging for that reason and because more routes means that driving a bus

may become more of a full-time job rather than part-time and a lot of bus drivers are working multiple part-time jobs. The industry is also being affected financially by canceled field trips and wants to have procedures that are as clear as possible so that they can avoid any liability if an employee gets sick. All in all, they would like to be a part of the conversation on the front end before plans are finalized and distributed to make sure that it works well. They are eager to be a part of the problem solving process.

Urban Indian Alliance participants continually highlighted throughout the interview the need to include students in this process as well as parents. Understanding that changes will occur, the participants wanted MDE to provide time to adequately prepare and respond to the decision MDE will make regarding the fall.

A parent's perspective on distance learning in Minnesota.

"**Like when parents are busy, where parents are working, like my issues. My first grader, for example, his teacher was sending out 13 assignments a day, literally like it would be a six year old. He cannot do those assignments by himself. So it takes me to sit next to him. I read every instruction to every single step with him, and I am blessed to be able to work from home. However, what about the parents who don't have the opportunity to work from home or the parents with different languages that already struggle to understand what's going on with their children or their school work? So you said it now, all these different assignments and it got real confusing. So me being who I am, you know, I reached out to the school and I reached out to the staff there, hey, you know, this is difficult for me. The way that you guys are saying nothing is I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do. Well, some things are optional, some things are not. Can we do things a little different? So I advocated and they actually switched and I was sending out the kids with me, as, you know, like mandatory and optional, which made it a little bit more easier. But it made it really hard for a child because he went to school every single day. Saw his friends every day what the kids thought every single day. And it just came to a stop. So they did do zone meetings once a week, but that wasn't enough for kids who used to see, you know, the staff and the teachers every single day. So if it was up to me, I would recommend or encourage them to do more. Make it so that they can just see the people that they usually work with. So there was like a really tough thing with both of my kids. I mean, my freshman, she was pretty set. You know, she didn't really have any issues, but it was like the younger kid not understanding what's going on in. Like I said, the instructions were just that they were hard. It was just too much communication, like I told, you know, because all the people in the district say, you got this like, oh, did you get this e-mail about this? I say, yes, some e-mails a day. I see three of them and they're not important. So I just look over e-mails. No, I didn't see that e-mail was supposed to go into selective grades for my kid because y'all sent me too many e-mails and I'm just, like, not reading them, so. Or what you communicate with parents**

so we can know what's important to actually read an email and what's not important because a lot of it was just like they sent in the same information back to back over and over again, you know?"

Appendix A – Participant Groups

[Note the MSBA Group and two Student groups could not be scheduled until June 16. An addendum to the report will be provided by June 19, 2020.]

Transportation Providers	Education Minnesota (Elementary and Secondary Groups)
Early Learning Provider and Leaders	Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA)
Community Education Directors	Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
Urban Indian Alliance	Charter School Leaders
Minnesota Youth Council	Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE)
Distance Learning Advisory Team 1, Team 2, Team 3	Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)
Education Minnesota	Family Groups (Greater MN and Metro)
SEIU Paraprofessionals	Minnesota Rural Education Association MREA
Tribal Nations Education Committee	
Racial Equity Coordinators 1	
Racial Equity Coordinators 2	

Appendix B – Feedback Sessions Question Script

[Note that not all questions pertained to all groups. An accompanying set of slides was used to guide discussions with groups as they responded.]

Distance Learning Feedback Sessions
Script and Questions

<u>Slide 2</u> (3min)
Hello and welcome. I want to take a moment to thank you for taking the time to join me today. My name is [INSERT NAME]. The Minnesota Department of Education is seeking feedback from its stakeholders (you) about distance learning implementation to see what lessons were learned and what potential guidance the MDE could provide moving forward should there be a need to continue distance learning in fall 2020. I come to you today from the University of Minnesota's Wisconsin-Minnesota Comprehensive Center, and I am interested in hearing your feedback about distance learning. This spring, schools and districts had no choice but to

implement distance learning in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. You were invited here today because you represent one of a number of stakeholder groups the MDE would like to obtain feedback from to help inform planning decisions, this information is not connected to formal research. We look forward to hearing your thoughts. There are no wrong opinions or answers to any questions we ask. All points of view are welcomed and valued. I encourage you to share your thoughts with the group, even if they seem different from what others are sharing.

In order to fully capture what everyone says today, the session will be recorded. I do not want to miss important information, which can happen if I am writing more than listening. Your comments will be kept confidential, which means we won't use your name in any report. Please speak one at a time so that the recording comes out clear. A representative from MDE will be listening to this session but not participating. The MDE wants to hear candid feedback, and you are encouraged to provide feedback that you believe could inform future planning.

I have several questions for you today and we have an hour to get through them, so I may need to move us along. If you have more to add than time allows, and you feel comfortable, you can place it in the chat box, or if you are more comfortable, please feel free to email me directly. My email is located in the chat box now. If you would like to respond to what someone else has said, I encourage you to do so either verbally or using the chat box, it will be my job to listen.

Slide 3 (1 min)

- Please introduce yourself in the chat box
- Name and School/organization you represent - Refer to Chat Box Example...

  Facilitator: Copy and Paste this Message in Chat Box:
  Welcome! Please enter your name and where you are from.
  Example: Katie Pekel, University of Minnesota

  Before I ask the first question, I would like to share some categories with you and definitions

Slide 4 (less than 10 min)

1. Please consider the four categories on the screen, and write in the chat box what category you are most concerned about. We are interested in what you and people in your role are most concerned about.
   a) Access (access to appropriate materials; ensuring internet access; meal delivery or distribution)
   b) Communication (Communication with families, especially those whose language is predominantly oral and/or not English)
   c) Instruction (ensuring daily interaction with teachers; tracking attendance; assessment)
   d) Supports (Meeting staff needs; supporting mental health; supporting ELs; supporting SWDs; supporting HHM; supporting early learning; supporting tribal communities; using partnership for vulnerable students)

Slide 5 (less than 5 min)

2. It looks like many of you are concerned with (insert item(s) validated in #1).
   The next question is around equity.

***MDE EQUITY DEFINITION:* Educational equity is the condition of justice, fairness and inclusion in our systems of education so that all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.**

The pursuit of educational equity recognizes the ***historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success*** *in learning for students based on their races, incomes, and other social conditions.*

Eliminating those structural and institutional barriers to educational opportunities ***requires systemic change*** *that allows for the distribution of resources, information and other support depending on the student's situation to ensure an equitable outcome.*

Slide 6 (less than 10 minutes)

3. What concerns do you have regarding **equity** in distance learning for students? For staff?

a) Access (access to appropriate materials; ensuring internet access; meal delivery or distribution)
b) Communication (Communication with families, especially those whose language is predominantly oral and/or not English)
c) Instruction (ensuring daily interaction with teachers; tracking attendance; assessment)
d) Supports (Meeting staff needs; supporting mental health; supporting ELs; supporting SWDs; supporting HHM; supporting early learning; supporting tribal communities; using partnership for vulnerable students)

Slide 7 (less than 10 min)

4. Knowing what you know now, and looking forward to next steps, what would you like MDE to know as they develop future guidance for districts in order to support, students, and families with distance learning in your school(s)?

Slide 8 (less than 10 min) Everyone:

5. Returning to school sites will require schools to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Health. *Read the list of guidance.* Recognizing that this guidance presents many hurdles, what support could MDE provide in helping schools' response to the guidance?

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Current Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Health guidance suggests things like:

I. Daily health checks: taking temperatures and screening for symptoms upon arrival
II. Staying 6 ft apart - desks arranged 6 ft apart with visual cues
III. Wearing cloth masks
IV. Staff ratio of 1:9
V. Groups of 10 of same staff and participants (classes) and do not intermix
VI. Back up staffing in case primary staff get sick
VII. When possible, hold activities outdoors
VIII. Accommodate the needs of children , staff, and families at risk from serious illness from COVID 19
IX. Meals: bag lunches or individual meals
X. Stagger arrival and dismissal times
XI. Multiple opportunities for handwashing, and access to hand sanitizer
XII. Avoid drinking fountains
XIII. Daily cleaning of surfaces
    1. Doorknobs and handles, stair rails, classroom furniture, light switches, handles on equip, push buttons, shared toys and computers, bus seats and handrails

Slide 9 (less than 10 min)

Operational Question Feedback

Only ask: Supts, Principals, Dir of SPED, Early Learning/Community Ed/ Charter Leaders

6. What LEGISLATIVE policies might the Department need to adjust in terms of policies or expectations in order to support school districts and charter schools?

Slide 10 (less than 10 min)

TRANSPORTATION/Superintendents ONLY:

7. Returning to school sites will require schools to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Health. Recognizing that this guidance presents many hurdles, what support could MDE provide in helping schools' response to the guidance?

   Current Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Health guidance for transportation suggests things like:

   a) Health screening/temperature taking
   b) 1 kid in each seat with a complete row in between
   c) Cleaning of bus seats and handrails

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Slide 11 (less than 10 min) ONLY TRANSPORTATION:

8. How might you go about training bus drivers on the guidance?

Slide 12 (less than 10 min) ONLY TRANSPORTATION:

9. What guidance do you need around general ed bussing versus special ed bussing?

Slide 13 (any leftover time) EVERYONE:

10. What did we miss and what further guidance do you need?

Slide 14

Thank everyone for coming.

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ADDENDUM - Distance Learning Feedback Report
Results Brief
June 22, 2020

Introduction

This report represents summarized results from additional distance learning data collection completed on June 16, 2020 as part of the Wisconsin-Minnesota Comprehensive Center's (WMCC) facilitation of feedback sessions with MDE's stakeholder groups. The information is supplemental to the previous feedback report submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) on June 15, 2020.

Participants

Three additional feedback sessions were conducted on June 16, 2020 with 21 participants representing three stakeholder groups. One group included members of the Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA), the second group included students from metropolitan area schools, and the third group included students from greater Minnesota. Each session was facilitated by a member of the WMCC team using the same set of guiding questions used in previous sessions conducted June 8-10, 2020. All points of view were welcomed and valued. The feedback session participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and provide feedback that could inform future planning. Each session was recorded and was only accessed by WMCC for analysis. A representative from MDE listened in on live sessions but did not participate.

The sections below summarize results from feedback discussions by groups' areas of most concern, and responses to questions about MDE's future guidance, operational guidelines, and legislative supports.

Summary of the Results

Participants were asked to respond to several questions regarding lessons learned about distance learning and future considerations for developing distance learning guidance in Minnesota. A summary of the results from feedback sessions are presented in the sections below. First, participants were asked to identify ***areas of most concern*** with regard to distance learning focusing on ***access, communication, instruction, and supports***. Second, each group was presented with MDE's definition of ***educational equity*** and asked to share their thoughts about equity for students and staff in areas of concern. The groups were also asked ***what MDE should to***

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know to develop future guidance for districts to help support students and families. Lastly, the groups were asked for ***feedback on operational guidelines*** developed by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for school sites to follow to the extent possible, while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. (Source: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html).

Areas of Most Concern

Access

Students were concerned about access and supports, especially as they relate to the unique obstacles of specific marginalized populations. Having direct connections with teachers and staff were identified as very meaningful. They believed that families without basic resources (e.g., internet, meal planning) were vulnerable, and those barriers made it very difficult for families to engage.

Equity in Access:

One **student** shared that a teacher made Zoom meetings mandatory to catch students up. This was much more effective than other classes that didn't schedule mandatory meetings. Students also experienced that asynchronous instruction was beneficial because they could watch them several times for clarification.

Communication

Students were very concerned with inconsistent communication and social-emotional supports. Lack of clear instructions on whether students were supposed to attend certain sessions sometimes made things frustrating. This also made it difficult to clarify information and understand content. The experience was notably different for students from in-person classes. Having more immediate feedback would be very beneficial for students. Communicating expectations clearly is crucial for student success. Teachers also need to be very familiar with the software. Supports (and access to those supports) can be very dangerous for students who rely upon those supports. More thought should be given to how these supports can be offered proactively.

Instruction

Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA) members were very concerned about the inconsistency in instruction indicating that some kids did fine with distance learning while others, such as special education students lost ground. There was also concern about teachers' capabilities for reaching kids and that the experiences of instruction were too varied based on the availability of parents at home as a result of work schedules. In the area of **communication** there was concern that not all schools/teachers established communication early or well. This led to further discussion of the importance of relationships and a concern with starting DL in the fall

as relationships would not be established. One participant shared a concern about access and that families were not accessing meals that were offered, while another said they were serving the entire community and had doubled the number of meals.

Equity in Instruction:

MSBA members had concerns that kids who may be school dependent are now not in schools and missing the structure and support that schools provide. The concerns regarding mental health were repeated as well as the inequity in access to good instruction. There was a desire for MDE to provide some clarification on equity of instruction. There were also concerns about devices and all kids having access to devices. The group also had some strong feelings about MDE needing to communicate faster. There was a statement by one participant that "equity comes in many forms" and that MDE needs to be open and responsive to this. This idea surfaced later in the discussion where many said MDE should allow flexibility for decision making at the local level.

What do you want MDE to know as they develop future guidance for districts to support distance learning in schools?

MSBA responded to this question with passion. One participant was on the verge of tears when responding that distance learning was not effective and she hoped it does not continue. She said, "I just wanted to start out by saying. And in case no one else is going to say it. I just want to say it. I'm not a fan of distance learning. I don't think it's the best way for us to deliver education to our students. If we had wanted distance learning, we'd be blue skyping things or online educating them in the first place. Our job and the reason that our brick and mortar buildings thrive is because we specialize in the one on one face to face. And so if MDE is hell bent on doing distance education, then they need to rethink how that needs to happen because this was not effective. Period." Others then jumped into say distance learning has been hard on the teachers and families. They followed up on one members comment on grading and overwhelmingly said they wanted MDE to allow local decision making on grading.

Students would like MDE to know that ***mental health check-ins, allowing sufficient time to complete work, supporting families with younger students, and allowing breaks are critically important for students.*** Students mentioned they had consistent check-ins on a specific day of the week that were very beneficial, and that students with unique needs should have flexibility with due dates to complete assignments. Students also would like a point person of contact at school to provide more support for families, especially those with younger children because they need to be more involved with students' learning. One school gave "breaks" on Fridays which helped students not have to worry as much about everything. "Break" days were emphasized by students as beneficial and allowed them to catch up,

Feedback on Operational Guidelines

Students voiced concern about how practices could impact marginalized populations (e.g., prioritizing *who* returns for in-person schooling versus who receives a distance learning format). Students also voiced concern around in school operations and how transportation can be made as safe as possible. They were specifically concerned about masks for younger students, making class size ratios work fairly, and procedures for when students test positive for COVID-19 at school.

Legislative Policy Adjustments Needed to Support School Districts and Charter Schools

MSBA members are both worried about what future tests may tell us and suggested re-norming them to account for the missed learning during distance learning while some felt testing should be eliminated all together for a while. They also thought that the idea of "seat time" should be examined, and that the number of hours in a day or days in a year may need to be more flexible next year. There was concern about if schools go back, can a district still provide "online" education if they are not an approved "online provider". They ended this discussion noting that districts are going to need help financially for a range of supports from PPE supplies to covering child care costs and staff who may need to be out due to COVID-19.

What did we miss?

MSBA members want future guidance on how to train staff around COVID-19. What safety precautions should be in place and eventual contract tracing? They also mentioned this training will likely need to include information on how to communicate with folks about COVID-19, both precautions and eventual cases in their schools.

Students emphasized that while social-emotional learning and maintaining levels of rigor in instruction are important, sports are also needed activities. Students believe they are a source of motivation and engagement for students and families, and social distancing can be practiced within many sports teams.