

## Dear MPS Families:

As we head into conferences next week, we know everyone continues to have many thoughts and questions about how learning should move forward in Minneapolis Public Schools. Since the pandemic caused schools to close in March, leaders have received hundreds of emails, phone calls and personal messages advocating for what families and staff feel is best for students.

While there are no easy answers, we are gathering data and working diligently to lay a foundation to return to some form of in-person learning this school year. You'll find more information on that below.

But we also want to acknowledge we are a community in anger and mourning. Just this week, we lost another student to the epidemic of gun violence plaguing our city, others in a terrible accident, and one of our staff members. These tragedies follow weeks and months of others, and all have left deep wounds in our community. And they are set against a backdrop of ongoing trauma in our city and nation.

Students, staff and families carry this all with them as they attempt to teach and learn. If you need help working through any of this, we encourage you to use the resources below and reach out to your school if your student needs additional support. Please know MPS is here for you.

This update includes information on:

- [Conferences next week](#)
- [Supporting children in times of grief and loss](#)
- [New 5 Phases to Safe Learning data dashboard](#)
- [Your thoughts on in-person learning needed](#)
- [Free meal boxes for all youth 18 and under](#)

### Conferences next week

Parent-teacher conferences start next week, Oct. 12. Because of concerns for safety given the pandemic, these conferences will be happening online or on the phone. You should hear from your school by Friday, Oct. 9, about setting up a time for your conference. If you haven't heard anything, please reach out to your school right away and make sure your contact information is up-to-date and find a time to meet with your child's teacher(s).

You can check out our [family resource video on conferences for more information](#). And remember, there's no school next Wednesday through Friday, Oct. 14-16!

### Supporting children in times of grief and loss

The last seven months have been deeply challenging for many people. In all corners of our community, students and staff have experienced seven months of constant loss—from gun violence, COVID, mental health struggles and a number of other challenges. Everyone feels the impacts of these losses differently, and it can be hard to know how to navigate them.

Our website has [resources to help families support their students](#), with everything from [things to do at home and conversation starters](#) to [links to mental health services and school-based clinics](#). We don't have all the answers, but we're here for your family.

### **New 5 Phases to Safe Learning data dashboard**

We understand families and students are anxious to know if and when schools will be moving toward more in-person learning. In an effort to increase transparency with our community, we now have an [MPS COVID Dashboard](#), a summary of the key factors involved in making the complicated decision to move to a new phase of learning. This dashboard is a dynamic tool that will be updated weekly with the latest data, and additional data points will be added in the coming weeks.

While we're looking at COVID-19 infection rates in our county and city, we're also looking at impacts among our underserved populations. Additionally, we have to factor in how comfortable staff are in coming back to work, how families feel about returning to some form of in-person learning, and what equipment and supplies we have to support safe learning.

And the reality is COVID can change our best-laid plans and disrupt what we're working on, so we have to be ready for that as well. We'll be providing more updates and will keep families and staff informed as we make decisions in the coming weeks.

### **Your thoughts on in-person learning needed**

As part of our effort to make informed decisions about learning for MPS, next week staff and families will be asked to indicate their level of comfort in returning to their schools and classrooms in person. The information collected will be critical to understanding if MPS can safely and successfully introduce more in-person learning.

We encourage everyone to respond, because we need to know and value your thoughts.

### **Free meal boxes for all youth 18 and under**

MPS is offering FREE weekly meal boxes to all youth, 18 and under. Each box contains a full week of meals and families can pick up one box per child per week. All families are invited to participate in this free program. Meal boxes are available for pick up on school days at 29 school sites across Minneapolis. Most sites are open 11 a.m.-3 p.m, and six sites have extended hours of 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sites will be closed Oct. 14-16 for MEA, so plan ahead and pick up on Monday, Oct. 12, or Tuesday, Oct. 13. [Learn more and find a pick-up site near you!](#)

### **REMINDER: Complete your Application for Educational Benefits**

We've already received AEB information from families of more than 10,000 MPS students. If your family is in that group, thank you. For everyone else, please don't wait. [Complete your form today!](#)

**REMINDER: Be counted—Census deadline extended!**

The 2020 Census is used by every level of government to decide funding for our children’s schools, childcare programs, and nutrition and health resources. The information collected cannot be shared or used against you in any way. Census data cannot be used for law enforcement purposes or shared with landlords. The Census Bureau will never ask for your Social Security Number, financial information or money. And the 2020 Census is prohibited from asking about immigration or citizenship status.

**Make sure you count everyone in your household, and complete the Census before October 31.** Fill out your census at [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov) or by calling 844-330-2020.