



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 5, 2020

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DSEA President Stephanie Ingram Calls on School Boards to Prioritize Health and Safety of Students and Staff in Planning

“DSEA continues to believe that the safest available option for our students, their families, educators, and their families is to begin the school year in a virtual learning environment. This virtual start will give districts the time needed to address important issues such as safe distancing in schools, the PPE that is needed for staff and students, and to assess their ability to comply with the other guidelines put out by the state. With recent COVID outbreaks at summer camps and schools that have already opened in other states, we need to make sure we get it right. We just can’t take the chance of opening our school buildings only to have to shut down again. We know that remote learning presents its own set of challenges, such as childcare; however, we believe the health and safety of our students and educators is too valuable to risk to avoid other challenges that we surely can overcome. Developing a reliable, consistent plan that everyone can count on makes the most sense. Once we have such a plan in place, we all need to do our parts – socially distance, wear masks, and frequently wash our hands – in order to give that plan the best chance to work for all of us.

Now more than ever, our members need to contact their local school boards, share their concerns, and call on them to take the time necessary to plan the safe reopening of our schools. Make sure your voice is heard in the process to finalize the district plans to reopen our schools. We are calling on all school board members to listen to their employees, to take their concerns seriously, and to develop plans that prioritize the safety and well-being of students and staff. Educators know better than anyone else what can and cannot be reasonably done in a classroom with their students. Only when educators and administrators believe that all of the health and safety precautions can be met, should school buildings be reopened, otherwise we should begin the 2020-2021 school year in a virtual environment and take the time necessary to get it right.”

DSEA also has a checklist they are disseminating that shows key requirements for reopening schools safely and equitably. The checklist can be found here:

<https://www.dsea.org/sites/default/files/wherewestand.pdf>

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