



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DSEA President Stephanie Ingram Calls for Delaware to Begin School Year in Virtual Learning Environment

“Last week, the Governor and the Delaware Department of Education released guidance for the reopening of Delaware schools. At the time, DSEA was optimistic that districts would be allowed to conduct a fair and thorough assessment of their ability to reopen school buildings consistent with the guidance. At the time, we stated that if districts had any question about their ability to reopen school buildings safely, they should commit to beginning the school year in a remote learning environment. Districts have just begun the process of meeting with stakeholders to develop their plans. Yesterday, we had many members who tuned into the Governor’s press conference hoping to gain more answers and clarity about the upcoming school year. Instead, they left confused, with more questions and heightened concerns about their personal safety and well-being.

DSEA recently conducted a survey of its members regarding COVID-19 and the 2020-2021 School Year. Based on nearly 4,400 responses, the survey yielded the following results:

- 85.3% have concerns about their personal health
- 88.7% have concerns about their family’s health
- 89.5% believe it is important that schools are closed to help prevent the spread of the disease
- When considering returning to in-person learning for 2020-2021 school year
 - 88.3% have concerns for their own health
 - 91.2% have concerns for their family’s health
 - 92.7% have concerns for their students’ health
 - 93.2% have concerns for their students’ family’s health
 - 93.9% have concerns for their fellow educator’s health

Through their survey responses and other communications over the past week, our members have made clear that the only way to protect the health and safety of students, educators and the communities they serve is to begin the school year in a remote learning environment.

To be clear, the safest available option for our students, their families, educators, and their families is to begin the school year in a remote learning environment. It is incumbent upon all of us to work as hard as possible to ensure that our students received the best possible remote learning experience while continuing to work on returning to in person learning only when we know it is safe to do so. We need to make sure that students and educators have the ability to access online learning by providing technology and ensuring connectivity.

Today, the DSEA is calling for the 2020-2021 school year to begin with remote learning and instruction for at least the first six weeks. Protecting the safety of Delaware educators, students, and families requires this action. We believe it will allow time to further evaluate the trauma caused by the virus, its impact on our student’s and educators’ mental health, the impact of the virus on the

physical health of children of all ages. It will also allow time to develop health plans for students and educators who are at a higher risk of infection and plans to meet the educational needs of students on a district-by-district basis.

We hope we have made clear where we stand on reopening schools – only when we know it is safe to do so. We encourage others who share this belief to join us. #DSEA4VirtualLearning”

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