



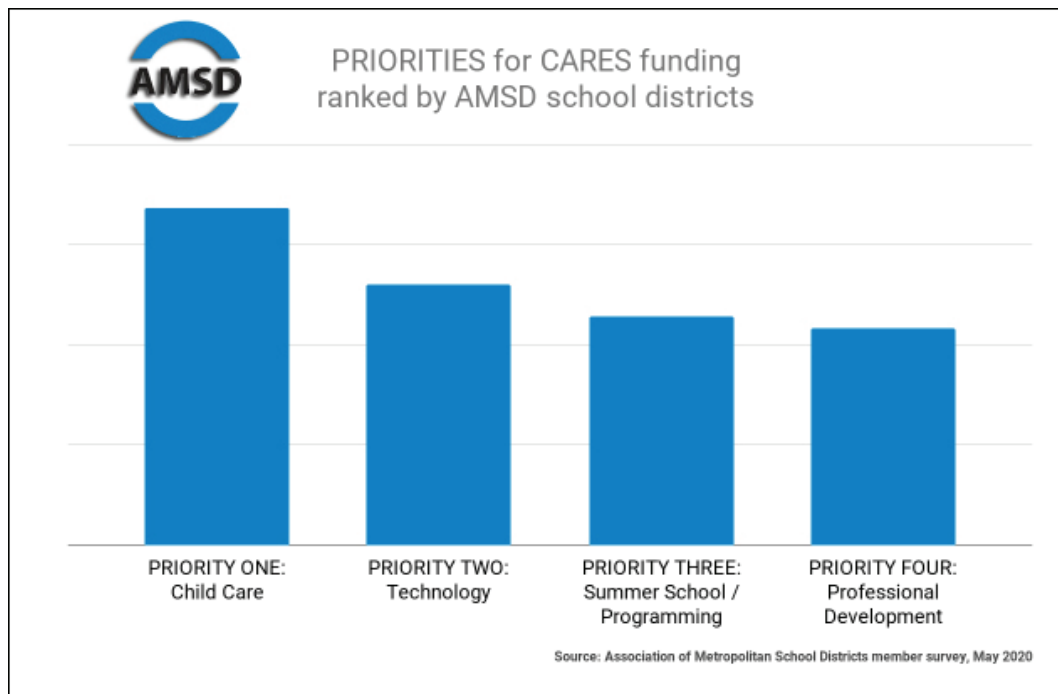
# 2020 MEMBER SURVEY

## PRIORITIES FOR COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDING

**The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the reality that our schools are the center of our communities.**

School board members, administrators, teachers and staff in AMSD member school districts have worked tirelessly to meet the needs of their students and communities during the Covid-19 pandemic. They have supported the work of our dedicated health care professionals and other critical workers by providing free child care for their children. They have served hundreds of thousands of meals to our students. At the same time they have turned a centuries old education model upside down to deliver instruction to our students in a distance learning model. There are countless success stories. There are also significant challenges and the distance learning environment has shone a bright light on the inequities in our system.

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts recently completed a survey of its membership to identify successes, challenges and priorities for the allocation of funding that is going to be distributed through the federal CARES Act.



AMSD represents 41 K-12 metropolitan school districts, four intermediate school districts and two integration districts which cumulatively enroll more than one half of the state’s public school students. Thirty seven of the AMSD districts responded.

The survey consisted of 20 questions that predominantly requested written responses, and focused on four themes:

- Technology
- Child care
- Summer programming/summer school and Fall 2020
- Professional development

Following is a summary of the results, including comments from districts that highlight the response themes. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

**Scott Croonquist**  
**Executive Director**

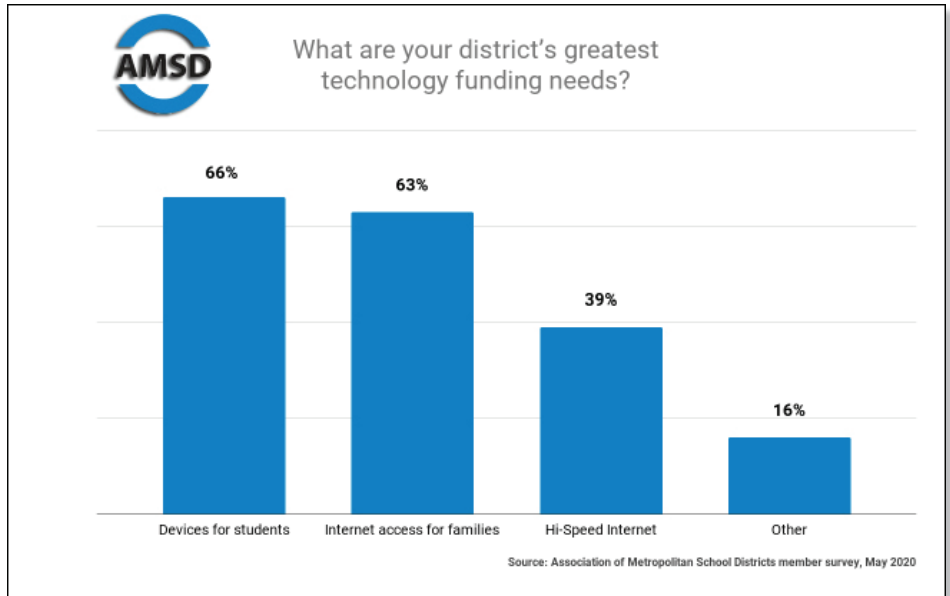


# Association of Metropolitan School Districts OVERVIEW AND PRIORITIES

**The primary purpose of the 2020 spring survey was to ascertain the needs of our school districts in a distance learning environment and their priorities for the allocation of federal and state funding related to COVID-19 support.**

Districts clearly have new financial concerns, from the costs associated with ensuring school health and safety, to the loss of fee revenue, and securing technology and Internet access for students and families.

The total loss of fee revenue for programs in the Nutrition and Community Education funds has been particularly challenging and threatens the ability of schools to provide child care and meals during the summer months. Of the AMSD districts who responded to identify the shortfalls in their Nutrition and Community Education Funds, more than 40 percent calculate shortfalls of more than \$1 million.



Examples include:

- ***We are short \$2.1 million dollars between Nutrition Services and Community Education.***
- ***Food Service and CE shortfall to date = \$1,029,000.***
- ***We anticipate \$1.9 million loss by the end of year. Food service \$1.2-\$1.5 million. We have also spent \$500,000 on cleaning equipment and supplies to date. Nutrition will be a huge summer issue for our families. We will lay off 200 staff June 10th without funding for summer programs.***
- ***\$2 million.***
- ***\$2.32 million though the end of year.***
- ***Nutrition \$700,000; Community Education \$900,000.***
- ***Community Education and Nutrition Services are our biggest need. I highly recommend that federal CARES Act funds be devoted to addressing these shortfalls.***
- ***We have used our entire Community Education fund balance — almost \$760,000, to keep our CE staff working. They provide the emergency childcare and continue to provide other services even though we cannot generate any revenue.***



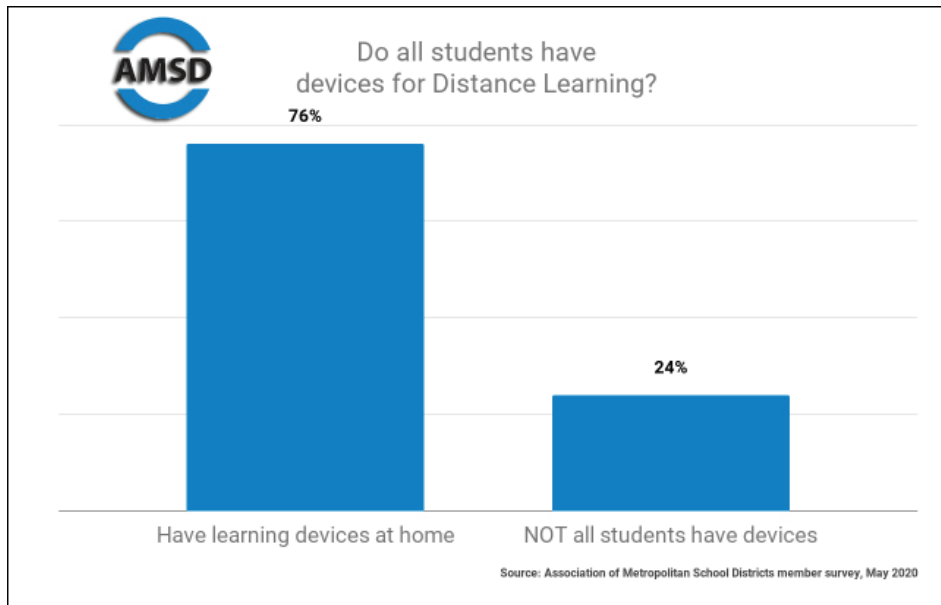
# Association of Metropolitan School Districts OVERVIEW AND PRIORITIES

Throughout the survey, districts continued to return to the theme that state and federal CARES funding will be essential to ensure districts continue to provide quality education to students.

- *Please devote funding to address the shortfall in child care and nutrition services.*
- *Will schools still receive our full state and federal funding?*
- *Commit the majority of the CARES funding now. In Fall 2020 we will learn about student learning and mental health needs resulting from COVID-19. With the State economy compromised by COVID-19 we have no resources to help respond to these new needs.*

When asked to identify their **greatest priority for the CARES funding, districts identified financing the child care** districts were ordered to provide under the Governor’s Executive Order.

While the districts have risen to the challenge — and the response has been nothing short of incredible — the districts remain concerned that shortfalls will soon become insurmountable.



**Access to technology** was the second priority identified. From access to high speed Internet, to providing devices to students, there is little uniformity among the state’s school districts. Students’ access to the Internet and devices is inequitable — whether because of lack of broadband infrastructure, or due to families not being able to afford the cost. Equitable access to the technology is paramount in a distance learning environment.

Priority Three: **Summer Programming, Summer School and Fall 2020.** While many districts have contingency plans for multiple scenarios, they remain concerned and eager for clear direction from the state level to plan for these events.

Finally, many districts identified a need to provide **Professional Development** to its staff not just for the safety protocols for when schools do return to buildings, but also for ways to innovatively offer instruction on technology that is changing as quickly as the COVID emergency.



## Association of Metropolitan School Districts

### PRIORITY ONE: CHILD CARE

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**The Governor's Executive Order requires that schools shall provide free child care for emergency workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey indicates that districts are concerned they will not have the funding to continue offering free child care.**

In their responses, districts have estimated costs for this care per week range from between \$15,000 to up to \$90,000-\$150,000 depending on the size of the district. In many cases, these costs do not include medical support such as on-site nurses, custodial services or meals.

When asked: "Please share any concerns you have if districts are required to continue providing free child care," more than 70 percent of the districts who responded had concerns about funding. Comments included:

- *How will we fund this in the summer?*
- *We are very concerned about the fact that we are not allowed to provide our fee-based childcare through our community ed program while other fee-based child care providers are allowed to continue their services. We have a larger child care need in the district right now that we are not able to support.*
- *If it extends past the regular school year, fees would have to be charged in order to pay staff to provide the care.*
- *Our staff who run the daycare don't*

*typically work in the summer. So new funding would be needed to pay for this.*

- *We would need funding if the expectation is that we cannot charge a fee and are expected to provide care.*
- *It would be nice to move to a fee based child-care option once school is out. This will allow for support financially and if the stay at home order is relaxed more students can participate.*

Respondents also expressed concerns about safety, social distancing, and large group settings:

- *Despite great effort, kids are kids and it is difficult to help them understand and adhere to social distancing guidelines.*
- *Requirements for PPE and screening continue to change. This makes planning difficult. We have concerns about availability of PPE if the number of children enrolled increases.*
- *We have carefully analyzed the health/safety/social distancing guidelines. One of the main considerations is space.*
- *The biggest hurdle is the health and safety of our staff and kids. The risk for this population catching COVID-19 is greater than the average person given the work the families do. Small ratios of kids 5 to 1 adult has helped with staffing and safety concerns but isn't sustainable long-term.*



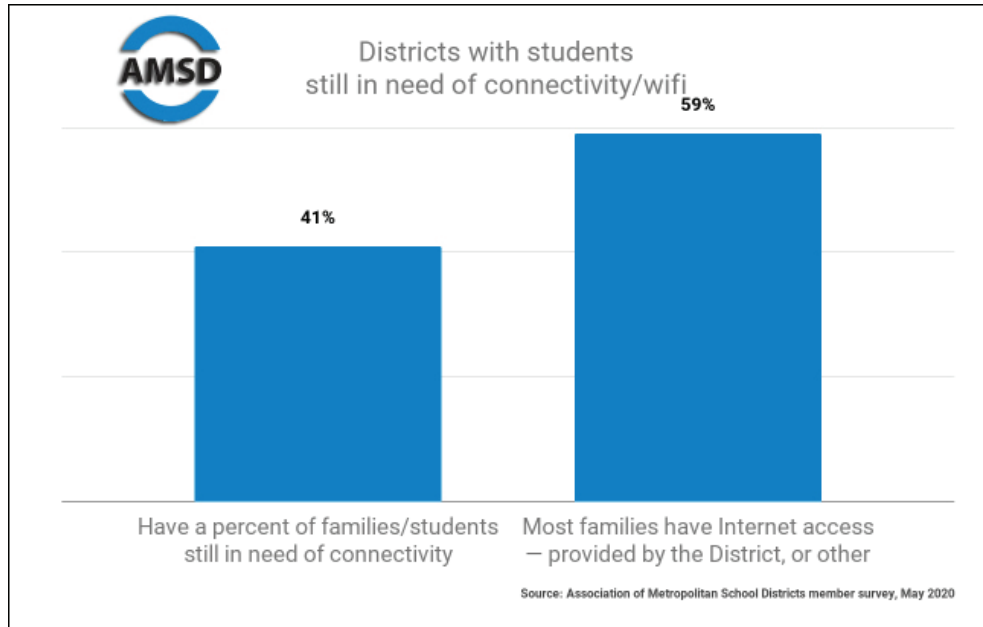
# Association of Metropolitan School Districts

## PRIORITY TWO: TECHNOLOGY

**A**s any Technology Services Director will tell you: costs for technology — particularly in 1:1 districts — go significantly deeper than just the cost of a device and hardware. Districts are responsible for costs of everything from software licensing of their multiple Learning Management System platforms to providing low-cost or no-cost Internet access alternatives for their students.

Multiple respondents directly identify access to technology — from device access to Internet access — as an equity issue the state is obligated to address.

- ***Students' access to technology should not be based on a district's approval of a levy. We need dedicated funding for each Minnesotan child to have devices.***
- ***Leaving districts to fund 1:1 on their own is an unbelievably insurmountable equity issue.***
- ***The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significant***



***differences by race and class for both personal device ownership and internet access. Districts can provide devices to students but should not be expected to be internet service providers. The state must ensure families have access to high speed internet.***

District leaders identified providing devices to families as their paramount challenge — and one they are rising to, albeit expensively. While only approximately one third of the AMSD districts report they are providing 1:1 devices for all their students during the pandemic, nearly all of the remaining two thirds are providing similar technology access by either identifying families in need or repurposing staff and extra district technology to meet student needs.

Still, there are districts who face challenges in providing equitable technology for all students.





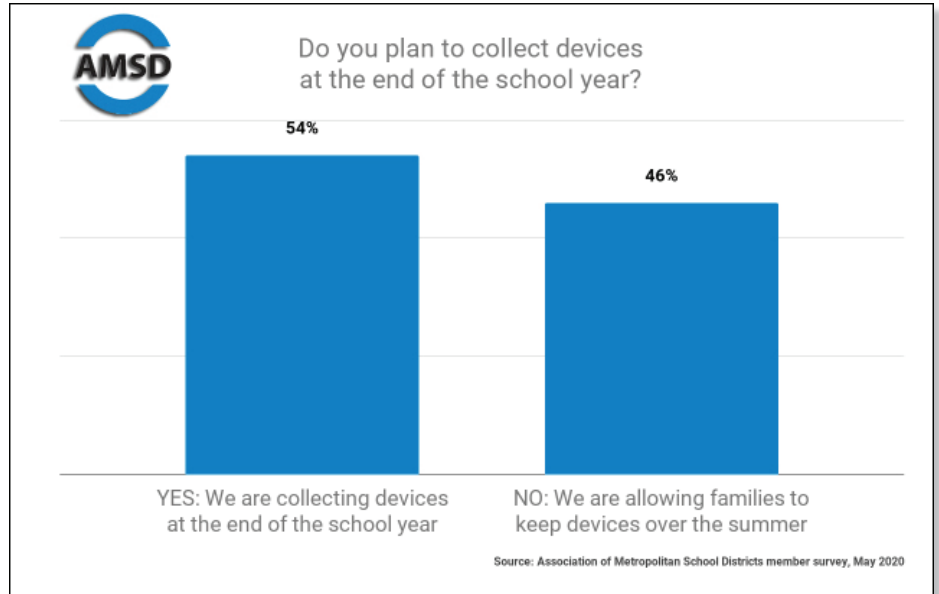
## Association of Metropolitan School Districts

# PRIORITY TWO: TECHNOLOGY

When asked: “How many students are still needing a device, and why?” comments included:

- **2,000 — we do not have a tech levy.**
- **It took us four weeks to order and deliver devices and hot spots to families in need.**
- **There are several families we have been unable to reach, meaning we aren't sure if they need a device/internet or whatever. We think we will have all the devices they need once we get a hold of them, but until that time we are just holding on to the devices.**
- **671 device requests were outstanding. Although everyone has been communicated with, we were unable to connect with the family to provide the device. Some families have left the city and others we are having difficult reaching.**
- **150 students still need their iPad, this is due to reaching families, when we can get accurate information we deliver or offer curbside.**

But while devices are important, they are relatively useless if students/families cannot reach the Internet to engage with their schools.



More than 40 percent of the districts who responded to the question “How many students/what percentage are still needing connectivity, and why?” reported they continued to struggle to ensure families had Internet access. The issue is as much about access as it is affordability. Even some of the largest districts in the state — in areas with full broadband infrastructure — reported that they still must use general fund dollars to provide “hot spot” technology to families who cannot afford Internet access. Comments include:

- **Mobile hotspots are very expensive. Difficult to provide for all families who need them.**
- **We distributed over 100 hotspots. We anticipate needing another 300 more for families experiencing data limits.**
- **Broadband in some of our more rural areas is spotty at best. Infrastructure is needed.**
- **We are also working to address other barriers where dead zones exists in cellular coverage that creates gaps where hotspots are not highly effective.**



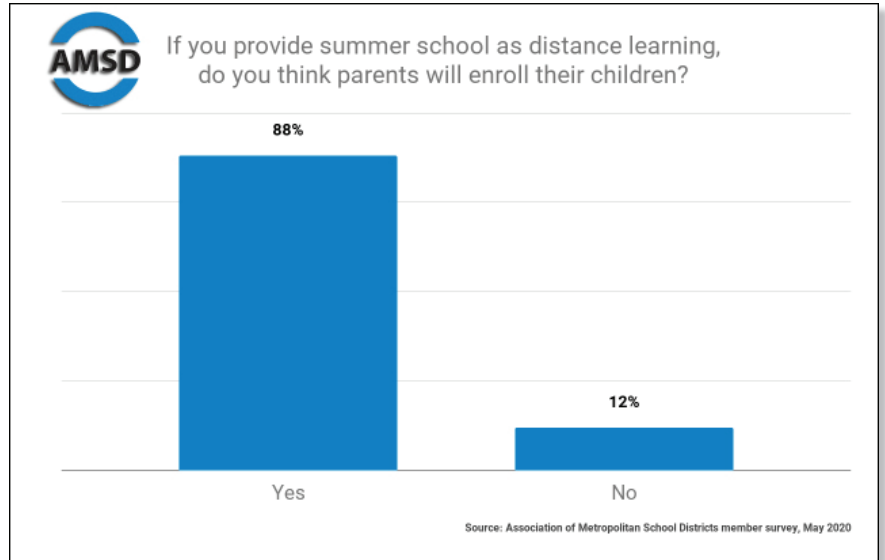
## Association of Metropolitan School Districts

# PRIORITY THREE: SUMMER AND FALL

**C**COVID-19 has changed the conversation of education. And with it, the conversation of summer school, summer programming and even how schools will resume in Fall 2020.

While most districts acknowledge returning to school buildings by summer is optimistic, nearly 90 percent of those responding to the question “If you provide summer school in the form of distance learning, do you believe parents will enroll their children?” predicted parents will consider summer school if offered — either in a distance learning model or a hybrid model of classroom and distance work.

- ***Our families need something for their children to engage in during summer that is safe.***
- ***We always have a percentage of students eligible for summer programs and services decline those services. We would anticipate slightly more students will decline if services are exclusively provided via distance learning versus face to face.***



- ***We believe we would begin distance learning only and then as the summer continues move to a hybrid model of some distance and some programs delivered in a social distancing model. Parents of elementary, in particular, are looking for creativity beyond just distance learning for their children.***
- ***This question is difficult to answer. Not only have we not yet received specific direction from MDE on what kind of summer programming we can provide, we do not know what our families will need or want. Which parents will be working and whether they can supervise/help their child during distance learning? Which parents will feel like their children have experienced loss in learning and thus need summer learning opportunities to catch up or be enriched. First - let's get direction from MDE, then we can better survey our families and determine best approaches to programming.***

As summer 2020 expands beyond education and looks toward fall, AMSD districts expressed more concern. Nearly all districts surveyed said maintaining safe social distance in school would be extremely challenging — and expressed concern that whether through cost or by practicality,



## Association of Metropolitan School Districts

# PRIORITY THREE: SUMMER AND FALL

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continuing a 20th Century learning model may not be possible. Concerns included:

- *How to social distance. How to scale back large groups- lunches, closed classrooms, hallways. How to keep a full staff when they may refuse to come to work due to fear or illness.*
- *Our teachers prefer in person instruction: How would we ensure social distancing, especially with the younger students? Will staff feel safe coming to school? We are having staffing issues now for food service and essential child care. How could we afford a hybrid model, the challenges for keeping instructional equipment and facilities clean, number of kids on a bus, cleaning after every run. Our schools are not designed for social distancing.*
- *Trying to manage some hybrid model of face to face and distance learning. I am not sure how families will organize this and I believe this will be a huge stress on our teachers with children.*
- *We are planning for a number of different scenarios and realize that it is probably unlikely that things would fully return to pre-COVID days. We are concerned there will be some reopening of schools and a good portion of employees, including teachers, may refuse to come to schools.*
- *At this point, we need guidance on social distancing in terms of busing, hallway time, lockers, classrooms, lunch, activities... We will need to spend some time reviewing potential solutions prior to seriously considering this option.*
- *How to socially distance when classrooms are designed for 25-30 students. If we can only have 10 kids in a classroom, we may need more classrooms. If some students do*

*not return, we'll need to provide in-person school AND distance learning. Perhaps some families will demand 100% online learning. Do we have the LMS and capacity to facilitate that? Across many spaces, there is a class divide.*

- *Health and safety and how do you social distance in a traditional school setting.*

Likewise, districts indicated that they are hearing the same concerns from parents seeking assurance about how safe a return to school is. Among the highlighted responses:

- *Parents have been clear both ways. That they can't wait for school to resume and some are fearful and may keep their children home. Many parents and caregivers are unable to support Distance Learning in the long term. Families are juggling many demands and re-prioritizing their life at home. While some families have the necessary resources, skills and health to continue with Distance Learning, other families lack some or all of these.*
- *Parents have expressed mainly four concerns:*
  - *What precautions will the district take to ensure student safety?*
  - *What options will parents have if they wish to keep their children home because of fears related to COVID-19?*
  - *Steps districts will take to reduce the spread of COVID-19? And, what happens if it occurs in a classroom? School? What will schools do? And, how will my children learn? Will they be required to go to school with a confirmed case?*
  - *Will bus transportation be provided?*
- *They are afraid for their children.*





# Association of Metropolitan School Districts

## MEMBER DISTRICTS

Anoka-Hennepin School District • Bloomington Public Schools • Brooklyn Center Community Schools • Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191 • Columbia Heights Public Schools • Eastern Carver County Schools • Eden Prairie Schools • Edina Public Schools • Elk River School District ISD #728 • Equity Alliance MN • Farmington Area Public Schools • Fridley Public Schools • Hopkins Public Schools • Intermediate School District #287 • Intermediate School District #917 • Inver Grove Heights Schools • Lakeville Area Public Schools • Mahtomedi Public Schools • Metro ECSU • Minneapolis Public Schools • Minnetonka Public Schools • Mounds View Public Schools • North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District • Northeast Metro Intermediate School District #916 • Northwest Suburban Integration District • Orono Schools • Osseo Area Schools • Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools • Richfield Public Schools • Robbinsdale Area Schools • Rochester Public Schools • Rockford Area Schools • Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools • Roseville Area Schools • Shakopee Public Schools • South St. Paul Public Schools • South Washington County Schools • SouthWest Metro Intermediate District • Spring Lake Park Schools • St. Anthony-New Brighton Independent School District • St. Cloud Area School District 742 • St. Louis Park Public Schools • Saint Paul Public Schools • Stillwater Area Public Schools • Wayzata Public Schools • West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan School District • Westonka Public Schools • White Bear Lake Area Schools

## PRIORITY FOUR: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**I**t goes without saying but needs to be repeatedly recognized: The distance learning models teachers and districts launched in April — with little more than two weeks prepping — is nothing short of remarkable. Again, COVID-19 has changed the conversation of education.

The execution of these plans didn't happen without the professionalism and dedication of the ranks — which is recognized by the support for continued development for teachers. After addressing child care needs, technology needs and student and family safety of students, districts also acknowledged teachers and districts need continued support. Among comments when asked for “the greatest needs and/or requests for professional development related to distance learning”:

- ***Effective instructional practices for distance learning. Social and emotional training to help students and families navigate the emotions related to COVID-19 and distance learning.***
- ***We surveyed our teaching staff and the top priority was keeping students engaged during distance learning. The second highest area of concern was working with primary students in distance learning. The final area that surfaces is meeting the needs of students on an IEP.***
- ***Our greatest needs for professional development as it relates to distance learning fall into 3 areas:***
  1. ***Training for new or unfamiliar technology platforms so teachers can navigate assignment delivery and grading.***
  2. ***Understanding the balance of teaching and home life for students, families, and teachers.***
  3. ***Meeting the mental health needs of our most needy students.***
- ***Culturally relevant instruction in a distance learning format.***
- ***Professionals don't necessarily need a ton more PD, but they need smartly designed collaboration and planning time. Time to collaboratively plan assessment, evaluation, how effectively they are constructing student lessons that require and increase critical consciousness. The state could focus on how to systematize personalized learning. That needs to be everyone's collective focus. Let's not do that in isolation.***