

## Education Minnesota

# Minnesotans must stay vigilant as COVID-19 cases rise in schools

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*ST. PAUL, Minnesota. Oct. 2, 2020* – The state reported that more than 800 school staff and students have already tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19, which Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota, said was more evidence that Minnesotans must remain committed to slowing the spread of the disease both inside and outside school buildings.

“No matter what we look like or where we’re from, nearly everyone in Minnesota wants their neighborhood school buildings to reopen safely and stay open through the end of the school year, but that can only happen if everyone does their part,” Specht said. “Our state needs to come together for its children and their schools.”

Specht encouraged Minnesotans to wear their masks, maintain social distancing and stay home as much as possible to limit the spread of the virus in their communities because it appears the amount of virus in a school is related to how much the virus is spreading in the surrounding community. She said educators and administrators had plenty of work to do as well.

“Educating our students safely and effectively during a pandemic is the most difficult thing we will ever do as educators,” Specht said. “We also need to make sure our schools can operate sustainably. Right now, we have models, hybrid in particular, that are exhausting the staff asked to implement them. Educators need to come together with administrators to revise these models and remove all the nonessential tasks we can. I can’t stress how important these negotiations are to make sure our schools are delivering safe and effective learning all year long.”

The Minnesota Department of Health announced on Friday that 864 cases have been linked to school buildings so far this school year, with 448 staff members testing positive and 416 students. More than 500 buildings have had at least one case. The figures include schools of all kinds, including public, charter and private. Outbreaks in schools tended to be in communities with high rates of transmission.

The data release on Friday was the first of what are expected to be weekly updates from the Minnesota Department of Health about the presence of the virus inside Minnesota schools.

### About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota’s members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota’s public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota’s community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota

campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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