

## Education Minnesota

# Education Minnesota supports a vaccine rollout that prioritizes educators as ‘essential workers’ so school buildings can reopen safely

For more information, contact:

[Chris Williams](#)

651-292-4816 (work)

651-247-5539 (cell)

*ST. PAUL, Minnesota. Dec. 8, 2020* – Education Minnesota supports priority rankings for the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines that list educators as “essential workers” who will receive the vaccine in the group after health care providers and long-term care residents.

“Educators want to get back into the classrooms of Minnesota with their students, but only when it’s safe for everyone to do so,” said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. “Free vaccinations for every educator who wants one is an important step toward that goal. Our union believes educators should receive priority access to COVID-19 vaccines because of the importance of safe, equitable and effective in-person instruction. Our members are also instrumental in delivering food, instructional materials and remote instruction to our students even when school buildings are closed.”

Specht noted the pain of the pandemic has not been shared equally. Communities of color in Minnesota represent a disproportionate share of the people infected, hospitalized and killed by the disease.

“The state and the federal governments should consistently and explicitly acknowledge and communicate the unequal effects of COVID-19 on Black, brown and Indigenous communities and take steps to ensure vaccines are readily accessible and available to our most impacted communities,” she said. “Further, the state and federal governments must account for the skepticism of vaccines based on historical exploitation of communities of color.”

However, Specht cautioned that the welcome news this week of federal approval of a COVID-19 vaccine should not distract Minnesotans from the importance of wearing masks, maintaining social distance and avoiding crowds for the next few months.

“Everyone who cares about students hopes this vaccine will be the beginning of the end of this pandemic, which has disrupted learning and driven so many educators to the breaking point,” Specht said. “But this pandemic is not over. We can all do our part to slow the spread of the virus and keep our hospitals and schools from being overwhelmed until the vaccine is widely available, which could take several months.”

According to published guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the top

priority group for the new vaccine, Phase 1A, includes health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities. The groups under consideration for Phase 1B include essential workers, such as educators, firefighters, police officers and people who work for utilities and in the transportation, food and agricultural sectors.

### **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.

**[Contact us](#) | [Local union websites](#) | [Careers](#)**

© 2021 Education Minnesota. All rights reserved.

**[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)**