MSTA’s Position on School Reopening

- **MSTA strongly** believes all students and educators have a right to a safe school environment.
- **MSTA believes** that science and the recommendations of local public health agencies, not politics, should drive decision-making about reopening schools.
- **MSTA believes** that school districts should make accommodations for teachers and staff at higher risk because of age or underlying health conditions to ensure their health and safety.
- **MSTA believes** all Missouri public school students, parents, and employees deserve to have a clear understanding of the protections and protocols their local school districts will put in place to address their health and safety.
- **MSTA believes** that each school district should develop, approve, and disseminate a local policy that prioritizes student and employee safety. The policy must describe the health and safety measures the district will take to mitigate and respond to the threat of COVID-19 and what action the district will take in response to confirmed cases of COVID-19 in staff or students.
- **MSTA believes** that districts should involve teachers and parents in the development of school reopening plans. In addition, plans should include a process for recommending and communicating changes.
- **MSTA believes** that instructional time should be maximized and protected. Therefore, MSTA believes that statewide testing such as MAP should be waived for 2020-21.
- **MSTA believes** that workers’ compensation insurance should be extended to cover school employees forced to miss time at work due to contracting COVID-19 or being exposed and required to quarantine. We urge the governor to support such an extension of coverage.
- **MSTA believes** that districts should prioritize the social and emotional learning of students when schools reopen.
- **MSTA believes** that the state and federal government should provide adequate resources for schools and teachers to make reopening school buildings as safe as possible. Teachers should not be expected to provide their own PPE or school supplies, nor should teachers be required to clean or disinfect their own classrooms.
- **MSTA believes** that teacher evaluations should consider the unprecedented nature of the current environment. Evaluations should not be used in a punitive manner.
- **MSTA believes** that school districts should inform the entire school building staff if an individual in their building tests positive for COVID-19. The school should work with the local health department to implement contact-tracing and notify employees who have had close contact with an individual who tested positive.
- **MSTA believes** forcing district employees to sign liability waivers for COVID-19 exposure in the workplace is unconscionable and unreasonable. MSTA believes these waivers are unenforceable and urges the State Board of Education to offer guidance against their use.

**Other Recommendations:**

**Staff Sick Leave Policies**
Staff sick leave policies are essential to easing the stress and anxiety felt by educators who may become sick or who have a person at higher risk from COVID-19 in their household.
- Leave policies should include the process for educators to work virtually should they be required to stay at home, as well as other leave policies such as pooling personal/sick days so that staff can access days beyond their own accrual.
- Teachers required to quarantine at home due to exposure in the classroom should not be required to use sick leave.

**Staff Childcare**
School employees rely on childcare that may have been previously coordinated by the district. Childcare is essential to the continuity of district operations by allowing school employees to work without disruption, which in turn allows students to learn and be supported without disruption. District policies should include a plan for childcare, including health and safety guidelines.

**Addressing Student Social, Mental, and Emotional Health**
Student needs outside of academics are at an all-time high. District policies should include how the district plans to bolster social, mental, and emotional supports for students. This may include training for teachers, who are often on the front lines of addressing these student needs.

**Addressing Staff Mental Health**
Teachers, administrators and staff already operate in a high-stress occupation, which has been amplified by the unknowns and uncertainties of the pandemic. The district policy should address how the mental health needs of employees will be supported.

07/23/2020