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The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota and The Minneapolis Foundation Release Parent Family Distance Learning Survey Findings

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic and shift to distance learning have strained efforts to close education gaps, the Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota and The Minneapolis Foundation released a survey to highlight diverse families' experiences and inform Minnesota schools as they plan for this fall. The foundations are partnering with the School Transformation Collaborative to host a virtual town hall featuring a panel of parents from Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs at **1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 22.**

District officials, teachers, principals, and state leaders are encouraged to attend the virtual town hall. The survey results and parent experience panel discussion will highlight key concerns among Minnesota families as the state Department of Education prepares to announce plans for the 2020-2021 school year later this month.

“Many parents have found distance learning to be extremely challenging,” said R.T. Rybak, President & CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation. “Nearly a quarter of the families surveyed reported their children were not keeping up with distance learning work. Parents also told researchers their children were not engaged in distance learning assignments. The survey contains more details on these findings and other insights for educators and state leaders as they prepare for the fall.”

“Many of the parents we heard from said distance learning at best has been ‘okay.’ We know okay isn’t good enough for Minnesota students given the gaps that existed in our schools long before the pandemic,” said Tierney Carroll, founder of the School Transformation Collaborative, which works to advance parent leadership in education. “We believe parents

can and should play a critical role in shaping the state’s approach to distance learning for the 2020-2021 school year.”

Tierney Carroll and other parents and family members from the Council of Families for the Future of Education-Twin Cities will share their experiences with distance learning and discuss the survey results during the virtual town hall. R.T. Rybak of The Minneapolis Foundation and Joel Luedtke of the Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota will co-host the event. Tierney Carroll will moderate the parent experience panel.

The Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota and School Transformation Collaborative engaged ACT Research to conduct the Parent Family Distance Learning Survey from mid-May to June 2020. ACT Research administered it online in English and Spanish. The survey attracted responses from a diverse group of 98 parents and family members with children in more than 20 districts including Minneapolis, Anoka-Hennepin, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Osseo, Robbinsdale, Edina, and North St. Paul. More than 60 percent of the survey respondents identified as people of color. Fifty-nine percent reported their students were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Half of the survey respondents said their children attended Minneapolis Public Schools.

Key themes from the Parent Family Distance Learning Survey responses include:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on students ranging from social isolation to mental health struggles and missed milestones during distance learning.
- Recent levels of real-time or synchronous interactions with teachers and peers fell short of parents’ expectations. Although most parents and family members (86%) reported having at least occasional real-time interaction with teachers or other school staff, fewer (62%) reported weekly or more frequent real-time interaction and only 28% reported daily or more frequent real-time interaction.
- Nearly a third of parents and family members reported not feeling prepared to help their children with distance learning. Many survey respondents indicated they want to be partners with schools in distance learning but need school staff to help them step into that role. This process includes ensuring families have devices and internet connectivity but also access to instructional materials to help their children learn.
- Parents with older students in middle and high school indicated their children are having a worse experience than those with younger learners.
- Looking toward the fall, survey respondents reported concerns about whether schools will resume in-person learning or continue with distance learning and the implications for their children’s physical and emotional well-being and academic progress.

Please visit minneapolisfoundation.org/reimagine-2 to download a copy of the survey brief and executive summary and to register for the virtual town hall.