



Partnerships for Pupil Progress During a Pandemic and Beyond

For Education Leaders

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” — Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

It is the best of times because:

- Technology is available to most Minnesota educators and learners to maintain communications and instruction.
- Health care providers, educators, postal workers, grocery store employees, and many, many others continue to serve.
- There is growing medical experience and expertise to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Most Americans choose to wear masks, wash hands often, social distance, avoid large gatherings, and test and quarantine when necessary.
- There is a revived commitment to combat racial disparities and to address inequities in education, health care, criminal justice, housing, employment, imagery, economics, etc.
- People are stepping forward to support and protect others in extraordinary ways.

It is the worst of times because:

- Minnesota has already lost thousands of precious lives, thousands more have become sick, hundreds of thousands of individuals test positive for the virus, and many more that unknowingly carry it to others.
- Some Americans still do not take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and others.
- Livelihoods have been lost or reduced and businesses have closed as a result of the vicious virus.
- The necessary technology for on-line learning is not available to all students.
- It is a difficult and slow process for teachers, parents, and students to adapt to changing roles to ensure an adequate education for all.
- Racial and economic inequities continue to exist throughout our Country and State.
- Solutions unfold slowly and/or are challenging or elusive.

Virtually all issues can be addressed in some measure by our citizenry. But it is imperative that educators play a leadership role in enhancing parent, student and school partnerships. Those partnerships are always important for students' social and academic success, but especially so as students experience the diverse teaching and learning models required by COVID19 health risks.

According to Search Institute, "Families matter for virtually every child and youth outcome...Kids do better when families are engaged and connected. But across the board, schools and youth/family serving organizations struggle to engage and partner with families as learning and programming partners, even though it's more important now than ever."

Several elements have been identified or amplified as a result of COVID19 including the following:

Health and safety

- Parents care about their children and they want them to have the full school experience, including peer interactions, physical activity, and face-to-face instruction and discussion. Those typical expectations are being challenged by current health risks.
- Masks (covering the mouth and nose) and social distancing are currently the easiest and most effective ways to deter spread of the virus. The numbers of infected individuals continue to increase, not only for students and staff, but also for the people they come into contact with.
- Quarantining, although difficult, is an essential element of containment of the COVID19 virus. Anyone who has been in close contact with an infected person should be tested and quarantine accordingly.
- According to the CDC, between March and October 277,285 COVID-19 cases in children have been reported nationally. COVID-19 incidence among adolescents aged 12-17 years was approximately twice that in children aged 5-11 years.

Adaptability

- Parents, communities, and teachers have a powerful opportunity to model adaptability and to encourage it in students.
- The ability to adapt to changing situations, work processes, and skills is an important life-long characteristic. Adaptable people tend to be more open and willing to learn new things, take on new challenges, and make adjustments to suit circumstances. "Additionally, developing your adaptability can also mean developing other soft skills like communication and interpersonal skills." – *Indeed, Career, February 25, 2020*

Access

- Access is a critical component of equity that all stakeholders should be concerned about.

- Diverse teaching and learning models require reliable and equal access to technology and technology streams.
- Full access requires that each individual learner has adequate guidance in the use of technology.
- It is parents' responsibility to provide oversight of school assignments and study time and to help their child maintain respect for education.
- It is the role of school teachers and school/district leaders to ensure parents and students have adequate support to be successful.

Communications

- Partners need to be invited, informed, motivated, listened to, and engaged in all issues related to prek-12 education during the pandemic.
- Students will benefit if parents communicate expectations and parameters about study time and place with them.
- Some parents may want and/or require additional information and training to support at-home and on-line learners.
- Clear communications of altered school schedules are required and should be received, read, and understood by students and parents.
- Two-way communications between parents and teachers about student's learning successes and challenges will improve outcomes.
- Regular communication times and processes should be established.
- A copy-ready, alterable, parent handout is available at MNASA.org.

The challenges are nearly unlimited as must be the creativity and commitment of all partners to improve safety, adaptability, access and communications during this pandemic and onward. Our shared futures depend on it.

Together we can influence student success, even in the most difficult of times.



These materials are provided by
The Minnesota Association of School Administrators

For additional information on this or other **INVESTMN** materials,
contact Shari at sprest@arkassoc.com, 952-255-8394,
19227 Ingleside Court, Lakeville, MN 55044