

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **New poll: Milwaukee residents split on school reopening but strongly support mask requirement for students and teachers**

**Black residents least likely to favor in-person learning this fall**

MILWAUKEE – As most city schools begin classes virtually, city residents remain divided on whether in-person schooling should resume this fall, and nearly half doubt the safety of reopening plans, according to a new poll released Friday by education nonprofit City Forward Collective.

Only 24% of respondents said they were confident or very confident in plans being made by schools and public officials for reopening K-12 schools, with 48% expressing little or no confidence. Ratings by parents of school-aged children were similar, with 28% expressing confidence and 44% expressing little or no confidence.

“No school reopening will be successful unless parents feel confident their child will be safe,” said Colleston Morgan, Jr., director of policy and advocacy at City Forward Collective. “In addition to making sound judgments based on public health data, school leaders must do more to engage families around reopening plans.”

Forty-eight percent of Milwaukeeans backed a virtual start to the school year, with just 21% expressing support for in-person learning, even with safety protocols in place. Black respondents were more likely to oppose in-person schooling, the poll found, with just 15% favoring a traditional in-person start to the school year.

“The harm caused by COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black residents, who still remain at greater risk,” said Patricia Hoben, executive director of City Forward Collective. “How we respond to these racial inequities needs to be front and center in how school leaders and educators serve students and families this year and beyond.”

### **Strong support for face masks, safety protocols**

When asked about plans for fall, respondents ranked things like face masks and safety procedures as more important than academic instruction. Ninety-one percent of parents rated cleaning and sanitation

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protocols as important, with 82% favoring required mask wearing and 81% supporting social distancing.

Parents didn't express a clear preference for how remote learning is conducted. Seventy-eight percent of parents rated live, synchronous lessons as important, and 79% said recorded, asynchronous lessons were important. In-person interaction with teachers rated lower, aligning with respondents' overall reticence about reopening school buildings.

#### **Devices, internet access remain an issue**

Thirty percent of parents and caregivers said they did not have enough computers and tablets for each school-aged child in their home to have their own device for remote learning.

The results also suggests thousands of households remain without reliable home internet access. City Forward Collective recently launched an Internet Access Fund to support internet access for Milwaukee students. Learn more at [www.cityforwardcollective.org/internet-access-fund](http://www.cityforwardcollective.org/internet-access-fund)

#### **Spring transition to remote learning gets middling grade**

Respondents were evenly split when rating the transition to at-home learning during Wisconsin's Safer-At-Home order this spring: 34% said they were satisfied, while an equal number said they were dissatisfied.

One possible explanation for those expressing dissatisfaction: Just 59% of parents and caregivers polled said they had access to their child's teacher during spring at-home learning, and only 54% said they received detailed information about their child's assignments.

The poll was commissioned by education nonprofit City Forward Collective and conducted by Brookfield-based Deringer Research Group. The survey reached 1,004 City of Milwaukee residents and included a representative sample of residents who are parents or caregivers of a school-aged child. The poll was conducted July 21 through August 31 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3%.

**ABOUT CITY FORWARD COLLECTIVE:** City Forward Collective launched in June 2019 and works to secure Milwaukee's economic future and quality of life by eliminating educational inequities and ensuring every child in the city has the opportunity to attend a high-quality school. The group works directly with Milwaukee school leaders, teachers, families and communities to build skills, knowledge and power to foster more high-quality schools for the children who need them most.

For more information, visit <http://cityforwardcollective.org> or contact Colleston Morgan by phone at (414) 899-1907 or by email at [colleston.morgan@cityforwardcollective.org](mailto:colleston.morgan@cityforwardcollective.org)

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