



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 8, 2020

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., State Superintendent 

SUBJECT: Enrollment and Missing Children - MEMO #COVID-19-124

Though the start of the school year was very different than any that we have experienced, it has still been good to reconnect—for our children, our staffs, and ourselves—especially in those communities that have been able to offer in-person instruction.

Yesterday was count day or, depending upon your perspective, the beginning of count month. Clearly, it is an important time in terms of student count and, by extension, the resources that you each have to support children in schools.

More importantly, though, it is a time to ask yourself the question: Where are our children? Where are the children that each of you served last year?

In a number of districts, staff have remarked about lower enrollments than last year. Indeed, this issue has begun to get some national attention, as noted in the Hechinger Report article whose link may be found [here](#). The specter of missing children—children who aren't being educated at all at the present time and whose educational whereabouts are unknown—is deeply troubling.

I ask you to do two simple things in an effort to ensure that **all** our young people are safe and educated at the present time. First, please take every measure possible to connect with every family whose children you served last year if you haven't done so already. Please don't assume that a child or children aren't in your district this year because they are being educated in another district or public school academy, in a private or parochial school, or at home.

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In most cases, parents will have made other legitimate decisions for their children's education, including homeschooling, and that's fine. What's patently unacceptable, however, is the specter of some children not being educated at all. With calls, texts, letters, home visits, and connections through boys and girls clubs, neighborhood associations, religious institutions, and other individuals and institutions within your communities, please make every effort to figure out where the children you served last year are and where they are being educated this year. Children shouldn't go missing from school, even or especially in a pandemic.

Second, please encourage the registration of home-school children by those parents who choose to homeschool their children. As most of you are aware and as Deputy Superintendent for Finance and Operations Kyle Guerrant wrote in a guidance [memo](#) you received earlier today, it is not required by law to register a child for homeschooling. That said, registration benefits the homeschooling family. It maintains connections with the local school district for auxiliary services, records requests, and possible future re-enrollment. Moreover, it establishes the homeschooling in a formal way in case a law enforcement official raises the issue of truancy with a family.

Additionally, the ability of school districts and the state to count home-school students and the ability to count public, private, and parochial school students mean that we are able to estimate the number of students who aren't being educated at all, with the assumption that the numbers of students leaving and entering the state this school year are roughly the same. This ability to ensure that all our children are safe and educated is vital.

Thank you for your service to children—all our children—at this critical time.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors