



Dr. Tony B. Watlington Sr., Ed.D.
Superintendent

Dear School District of Philadelphia Families,

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, or SEPTA, is currently negotiating a new contract with the Transport Workers Union Local 234. The current contract expires on Tuesday, October 31, 2023, and the union has already voted to authorize a strike **if** a new contract agreement is not reached by then. **In that case, it is possible that a SEPTA strike could occur beginning at midnight on Wednesday, November 1, 2023.** The strike would affect the Broad and Market/Frankford subway lines, all city bus routes and six trolley routes. While the School District of Philadelphia is not directly involved in these contract negotiations, it is clear that a SEPTA strike would have a significant impact on the operation of our District.

While I respect the right of union members to advocate for themselves, I hope that this strike can be avoided so that we can continue to operate normally and support the social, emotional, and academic needs of our students without disruption. However, it is critically important that we remain informed and prepared. Here are the items we are considering as we prepare to support students and families in the event of a SEPTA strike:

- **Student Transportation Impact** - Nearly 55,000 Philadelphia students would be impacted. In the midst of an ongoing national driver shortage, providing transportation support to all students who would need it during a strike would not be an option.
- **Student Attendance** - Attending school in-person provides our young people with the familiar routines, sense of community and support services that they need for their social, emotional and academic well-being. Therefore we are considering relaxing absence and attendance policies such that students who are late or absent due to SEPTA-related travel challenges will not be marked late, or will be excused upon receipt of a note from the parent or guardian.
- **Staff Travel Impact** - Many of our staff rely on SEPTA to travel to and from our schools and offices. Temporary reassignments, extended overtime, and relaxation of start and end times are all being considered.
- **Continuity of Learning** - We are fully committed to ensuring that learning continues for all students in the event of a SEPTA strike. While the ideal would be to maintain in-person learning for all students, please know that staffing challenges or other conditions that may result from a strike *could* require some or all of our schools to shift to hybrid or 100% virtual learning. We will be exploring all feasible options with the goal of ensuring learning continues safely and effectively for as many students as possible.
- **Student Supports** - We are also committed to maintaining vital supports for our students and families such as grab-n-go meals, technology services, safety and more. We are considering all of these services during our preparation and planning.

What You Should Do Now

We realize that there are a lot of unanswered questions at this time about how our District will operate if a SEPTA strike occurs. We ask for your patience as we thoughtfully work through our options. In the meantime:

- if your child's Chromebook is not working or needs repair, be sure to contact your child's school for a replacement or visit this [Chromebook Support Webpage](#) for information about our tech support centers and hotlines;
- visit the [Internet Access Options for Families](#) webpage if you need Information about low-cost internet access;
- visit our [SEPTA Strike Blog](#) regularly for the latest information regarding the District's operations during a strike;
- visit [SEPTA's strike preparation website](#) for information about the transportation services that will be impacted, as well as those that will still run during a strike;
- and visit the [City of Philadelphia's strike preparation website](#) for information about parking, alternative transportation options, and more.

I will provide another update on the situation on Tuesday, October 31. Thank you for your patience and trust as we consider all angles for supporting student achievement, even in the midst of this challenge.

In partnership,



Tony B. Watlington Sr., Ed.D.
Superintendent
The School District of Philadelphia