FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mott Foundation grants $163,000 to Flint Community Schools to expand access to remote learning during pandemic

Flint, Michigan – The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation granted $163,000 to Flint Community Schools to purchase the technology the district needs to deliver educational content to its students in a remote learning environment.

The grant will be used to purchase 800 mobile Wi-Fi hot spots and 1,500 Mobile Guard applications. The hot spots will help expand internet access so more Flint students can participate in educational opportunities while schools are closed. The Mobile Guard applications will provide important content filtering to keep students safe while online.

“This technology is necessary to ensure students are still learning and part of a community even when they can’t physically be in a classroom,” said Ridgway White, president and CEO of the Mott Foundation. “We know an access gap exists, and we hope this grant gets us a step closer to eliminating it.”

Interim Superintendent Anita Steward recently presented a distance learning plan for Flint students while school buildings are closed under Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s executive order. Implementation of the plan is already underway, and families in need of these additional devices will be contacted directly by the district regarding pickup information.

Flint Community Schools already has provided Chromebooks with built-in internet access for middle and high school students. However, while the district has technology devices available for K-6 students to use at school, the devices are not programmed with the filters that would be required to ensure their safe use at home. Providing the hot spots and the Mobile Guard applications will help to eliminate learning barriers while also protecting students.

Students and families in the district are being contacted twice each week, at minimum — once by a teacher for learning support and once by a Wellness Team member for social and emotional support. Flint Community Schools also will work to provide learning activities aligned to the unique needs of each student, including those who require English Language Learning services, Individualized Education Plans and 504 plans.

“School buildings may be closed for the remainder of the school year, but educating our students and personally connecting with them each day remains our priority,” Steward said. “We are incredibly grateful for the support of community partners like the Mott Foundation. During
these challenging times, we will continue to explore opportunities to ensure our students have access to learning materials necessary for their academic growth."

In addition to the core academic areas of reading, math, science and social studies, the district's plan includes physical fitness, mindfulness activities, and the exciting activities that students traditionally participate in through community education and the YouthQuest afterschool program.

“Community school directors, community health workers and YouthQuest afterschool staff will be available to all our families and will offer activities that complement the lessons delivered by our teachers,” Steward said. “We want our families to know that the people and services they depend on every day in the school buildings will be available virtually. We are committed to serving our students with not only the academic lessons they need to be ready for next school year, but with the social interactions and friendly faces that make coming to school fun.”

Existing Mott Foundation grants to the Crim Fitness Foundation for the community education initiative and to the Genesee Area Focus Fund for the YouthQuest afterschool program will allow both organizations to work alongside Flint Community Schools as the district implements its distance learning plan.