



9/23/20

Hello Tumwater Families,

First, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for doing your very best to make the most of the first weeks of remote learning. I recognize that these times are very challenging, stressful, and everything is new. Our staff members are working extraordinarily hard to plan and deliver remote learning, and we encourage you to continue to show your children and their teachers grace as they practice and improve at this mode of instruction. Everyone is giving the best they have in these difficult times, and it is sincerely appreciated. We also know how difficult this is for our families, and we appreciate the work you are doing to navigate those challenges.

At the bottom of this letter you will find a letter we received this morning from Dr. Abdelamalek, the Thurston County Public Health Officer. In it, she recommends for school districts in Thurston County to prepare and begin a *slow, careful, phased approach* to resume in-person learning prioritizing high-need students. In alignment with this guidance, we will seek to prioritize our youngest learners for in-person hybrid instruction first, and we will continue to identify our highest need learners at all levels to prioritize for services in support of educational equity. In this letter, we are asked to finalize planning and to move forward with a thoughtful process to serve students with in-person learning.

Also below you will find our roadmap “Heading to Hybrid” that displays the some of the immediate work ahead, which includes:

- Surveying staff to determine who will be able to return in-person to their assignment.
- Finalizing decisions regarding which grade level(s) to bring back first, as well as the timing and phasing of shifting to hybrid instruction as recommended.
- Meeting with employee associations to consult and review agreements on opening to a hybrid model.
- Surveying families to find out which elementary students will not return for in-person instruction and want us to continue providing a full remote instruction model.
- Considering our ability to provide staff to continue teaching fully remote for those students who will not return.
- Filling staffing needs for a hybrid instruction model.
- Preparing classrooms and buildings for hybrid instruction.
- Completing a list of tasks necessary to safely return students to classrooms in a hybrid model.

We are not yet prepared to share a timeline for opening hybrid learning. Right now, we want you to know the steps we are taking to prepare for hybrid instruction. While we have a reopening plan, some of these steps could not be completed until we know when we can

move forward. Now that we know, we will determine and communicate a reasonable timeline as soon as possible. In the meantime, please look for additional messages this week requesting information we need to make staffing and program decisions for hybrid learning.

Please watch for further information soon.

Have a great day,

Sean Dotson, Ed.D.

Superintendent



HEADING for HYBRID

Sep 23, 2020

Thurston County Public Health Officer announces schools can begin to plan for in-person services in hybrid model



Staff Survey

Determine who will be able to return in-person to their assignment

Grades levels

Finalize decisions regarding which grade level(s) to bring back first



Work with Associations

Work with employee associations to consult and review agreements on opening to hybrid model

Parent Survey

Determine which elementary students will return for in-person hybrid and those who want to continue fully remote



Staffing Step 1

Consider our ability to assign staff to continue teaching fully remote for students who will not return

Staffing Step 2

Fill staffing needed to begin hybrid instruction model



Building Prep

Finalize preparing classrooms and buildings for hybrid instruction

Logistics

Finalize bus routes, food service plans, health screening, drop-off/pick-up, etc



Set Dates & Phases

Finalize phases and dates for return of students to hybrid in-person instruction

2020-21 Return Date TBD

9/23/20



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

John Hutchings
District One

Gary Edwards
District Two

Tye Menser
District Three

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

September 23, 2020

Schelli Slaughter, MHA
Director

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Dear Thurston County Superintendents and K-12 Educators,

In my last [letter to you on July 30, 2020](#), I recommended distance learning for the fall term for all K-12 schools in Thurston County because the cases of COVID-19 were rising at an alarming rate. Thank you for your diligence in heeding my recommendation and providing your students with distance learning models for the beginning of the school year. As I have watched the case counts decrease and Thurston County residents taking action to slow the spread, I am now recommending a slow, careful, phased approach to resume in-person learning prioritizing high-need students.

When I made my previous recommendation in July, our cases had risen from less than 25 new cases per 100,000 people over two weeks at the beginning of July to 60.5 new cases per 100,000 people during a two-week period on July 29th. At that time, it appeared Thurston County was on track to exceed 75 cases per 100,000 population by the start of school. I communicated to you I would watch our transmission rates after the Labor Day holiday to see if we experienced another spike. I am pleased to say, after a full incubation period of 14 days, there has not been a spike. As of September 19, 2020, our transmission rate is 30.8 cases per 100,000 people. This data gives me the confidence to allow a slow, careful, phased approach to resume in-person learning.

The Department of Health released [K-12 Schools – Fall 2020-2021 Guidance](#) and [Decision Tree for Provision of In Person Learning among K-12 Students at Public and Private Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) on August 5, 2020. These documents provide guidelines for when to initiate in-person learning and the factors that must be considered to ensure this is done safely. Some of these factors include community transmission rates, access to testing, health care capacity, school resources, and public health capacity for adequate contact tracing and case investigation. The [Decision Tree](#) recommendations for

schools are based on three levels of community transmission rates, high (>75 cases per 100K over 14 days), moderate (25-75 cases per 100K over 14 days) and low (< 25 cases per 100K over 14 days). Thurston County is currently in the moderate transmission range.

I support each educational institution as they prepare for and gradually phase in more in-person instruction with the requisite robust COVID-19 safety protocols, communication plans, and coordination with Thurston County Public Health and Social Services (PHSS) in accordance with [Washington State Department of Health guidance](#), [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction \(OSPI\) guidance](#), and [CDC guidance](#) in the way that best suits the unique needs of the community they serve.

PHSS has partnered with school districts and developed a [Communications Plan](#). This plan outlines the flow of communication between parties, when a classroom will be closed, and when a school may be closed due to students or teachers testing positive for COVID-19. In order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in school, isolation of individuals with probable or confirmed COVID-19 and quarantine of close contacts is vital. Students or teachers in isolation or quarantine will not be able to attend school. The ability of schools to operate may be affected by these restrictions. Outbreaks within a classroom or school may require interruption of in-person learning to stop the spread of disease.

If our community transmission rates of COVID-19 increase at an alarming rate, I may require restrictions of in-person learning until transmission rates return to moderate or low levels. I will monitor our key indicators to help guide me in my decision making. These include trends in the 14-day case rate per 100,000 population, the percent of COVID-19 positive tests, hospital and intensive care capacity, trends in quantity and types of outbreaks, and PHSS's capacity for timely case investigation and contact tracing.

I will continue to make recommendations to protect the health and safety of all of those who work and learn in our schools based on the best available science. When school districts and schools follow all the provided guidance outlined we can ensure, to the extent possible, sustainability of a school environment where in-person learning is safe for all who work and learn in our schools. I look forward to partnering with you in the days ahead to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH

Health Officer, Thurston County

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