



*Every Student Matters, Every Moment Counts*

**Morton School District #214**  
**Home of the Timberwolves!**

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**Morton Jr/Sr High School**

152 Westlake Ave. ~ Morton, WA, 98356  
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**Morton Elementary School**

400 Main Ave. ~ Morton, WA, 98356  
p: 360-496-5143 ~ f: 360-496-0327

December 17th, 2020

RE: Request for exemption based on 12/16/2020 updated guidance from Governor Inslee

To: Dr. Rachel Wood, JP Anderson

On December 16th, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee updated the State of Washington with new guidance for returning to in-person learning. The levels of high, moderate, and low were adjusted with new threshold numbers along with phasing in in-person learning. I am requesting on behalf of the Morton School District for Lewis County Public Health to issue an exception to our district based on our configuration. It is the contention of this district that the Lewis County Public Health Officer can grant us an exemption based on the following factors:

1. Governor Inslee continues to state that the decision to return to in-person learning is a local decision and not one that falls under the authority of the Governor's office;
2. In August, all schools throughout the State of Washington were required and did complete a form stating who is our local health officer for our county and that we would follow the recommendations of this person;
3. The Morton School District has contractual agreements with the associations representing our employees that state we will follow the guidance of our local Health Officer Dr. Wood; and,
4. The document sent out by DOH yesterday and spoken on by the Governor states that a demonstrated ability by a district to limit the transmission of COVID-19 may allow a district to return students earlier than stated in the guidance already mentioned.

To be clear, we are not asking for an exemption to begin immediately or at a specific date. Instead, we are requesting that once our county numbers fall below 350/100,000/14 days we are allowed to return our high school students along with our middle school students to in-person learning. As you are aware and have previously granted earlier this year, our layout of our district has our middle grades and high school grades in the same building and using the same teachers.

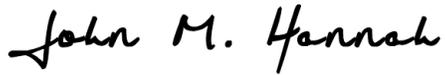
With your granting of the exception, we will continue with our current practices already in place and having a positive effect. This includes our daily screening of all staff, students, and visitors. Twice daily handwashing by all students. Cleaning of desks throughout the day and disinfection of surfaces and high-touch areas each evening. We will keep the improved airflow process in place throughout the remainder of this pandemic as well. Finally, we will continue to keep in contact with LCPHSS staff as needed and work through all necessary steps to continue a safe learning environment for our students and a safe working environment for our staff.

It is our contention that our previous work throughout this school year and our demonstrated success in limiting the spread of COVID-19 by our past/current actions show that we are able to and willing to be effective in battling this virus.

*The Morton School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Title IX Coordinator/ADA Coordinator/Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator and Superintendent John Hannah, 152 Westlake Avenue, Morton, WA, 98356, 360-496-5300, [jhannah@morton.k12.wa.us](mailto:jhannah@morton.k12.wa.us), or Section 504 Coordinator Becky Brooks, 152 Westlake Avenue, Morton, WA, 98356, 360-496-5137, [bbrooks@morton.k12.wa.us](mailto:bbrooks@morton.k12.wa.us).*

We strongly encourage the granting of this exception now so we may begin the work needed to plan and work with our community stakeholders in preparation for the day when our numbers meet the necessary threshold. Plus, we believe this exception is an opportunity to help educate and encourage our community on the necessity of following the guidance currently in place so our students may return to school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Hannah". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'H'.

**John Hannah**

**Morton School District Superintendent**