

April 30, 2021

Dear Ridgefield Families,

While we continue to make significant gains in our fight against COVID-19, current activity in Clark County is on the rise. It is possible, even likely, that the case rate will rise above 200 per 100,000 when released this coming Tuesday. This change could lead to Clark County being “rolled back” to a more restrictive phase of the state’s reopening plans. I want you all to know that the Ridgefield School District intends to remain in full in-person learning for all grade levels despite this possible change.

You may be aware that on March 25, OSPI released updated school guidance ([K-12 Schools 2020-2021 Guidance](#)). The guidance supports having K-6 grade students remain in full in-person instruction with three feet of social distancing for students, even if the COVID Activity Rate goes above 200. It also recommends that students in grades 7-12 be cohorted or return to six feet of social distancing. Due to the nature of secondary school schedules, cohorting, particularly in the middle of a term, is impractical. Returning to six feet of social distancing for students would require a return to the hybrid learning model.

Some may be asking why we are not returning to hybrid learning in grades 7-12 if the COVID rate exceeds 200 per 100,000. First, please know the District continues to work closely with our public health officials and will monitor and make adjustments as necessary. It is important to note that the state’s metrics are recommendations but not requirements. As Clark County Public Health Officials have indicated on numerous occasions, “School administrators are ultimately responsible for making decisions about education settings and modes.”

Many factors go into deciding on the mode of school operation. Particularly important in our decision is the data indicating that school transmission has not been a factor in the recent uptick in positive cases. The Clark County Public Health Department tracks [COVID-19 outbreaks in schools](#), and to date, there have not been any outbreaks identified in Ridgefield Schools. Our safety protocols and mitigation strategies are working, and I am grateful for the diligence of our students, families, and staff.

We all must continue to do our part and remain vigilant in adhering to COVID safety and prevention precautions. The biggest game-changer is and continues to be vaccinations. The continued increase in community-wide vaccination rates will assist in stabilizing county rates. Recently, vaccinations have opened to all Washingtonians aged 16 and up, and there are now ample opportunities for high school students to get vaccinated. In fact, there is a free vaccination clinic in Woodland on Saturday, May 8. [This flyer \(available in English and Spanish\) has all the details.](#)

In March, Governor Jay Inslee said, “There is now, unfortunately, undeniably a mental healthcare crisis in our state regarding our youth.” While some students persevered and found ways to thrive in a remote environment during the pandemic, we know that many others need our schools to be open for their academic and emotional well-being.

Our goal has always been a safe and sensible return to full in-person learning. Our ability to equitably meet the needs of all our students is dependent on this. Families with students in grades 7-12 who have concerns about remaining in full, in-person learning will have the option to switch to remote learning for the remainder of the school year.

As always, I thank you for your continued support, patience, grace, and understanding. Stay well and remain #RidgefieldResilient.

Sincerely,



Dr. Nathan McCann
Superintendent