



August 11, 2021

Dear students, staff, families and community,

I hope you are all enjoying summer and have found time to connect with friends and family as well as enjoy our beautiful surroundings. You have a few weeks left to rest and rejuvenate before starting school on September 2nd. I am looking forward to seeing everyone and launching a new and better school year with full-time in-person attendance. We have come a long way. Being all together again is something to celebrate!

Back to school events at the elementary level will take place on September 1st from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at each of our elementary schools. Ninth grade orientation will be September 1st from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Mount Baker High School. Mount Baker Junior High has seventh grade orientation on September 1st from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. Families will be receiving more information directly from their school.

Complete meals for breakfast and lunch will be at no cost to families for the 2021/22 school year. This is true for every student nation-wide as well as in Mount Baker School District. Our Child Nutrition Department is proud to provide this service. If you have questions, please call Child Nutrition at 360-383-2024.

Thankfully the [updated health and safety guidelines](#) provide more flexibility. The Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Health, (DOH), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will be reviewing and revising the guidelines again once school gets underway. I am anticipating these updates mid-October. While both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals must wear masks inside, and we will continue cleaning and hygiene protocols, we will no longer require attestations. Physical distancing will be three feet in classrooms to the extent possible. When students are three feet apart and wearing masks, they are not considered close contacts. The overriding goals are to have all students in-school full-time and to limit transmission of COVID-19. Cases will be reported and contact traced, but with more vaccinated individuals and testing availability we hope to keep quarantines at a minimum.

There has been controversy regarding Governor Inslee's emergency order requiring students and staff to wear masks at school, regardless of whether they are vaccinated. I have been urged by some community members to defy these orders and make masks optional in our schools. This is not a local decision for superintendents or school boards. Under the authority of [RCW 43.06.220](#), the Governor has broad emergency powers, and they have the power of law. Along with all other public schools, charter schools, private schools, and tribal compact schools, Mount Baker School District must follow all of the

health and safety guidelines. Again, it is our goal to provide full-time in-person learning for all students and to limit the transmission of the virus.

For clarification, COVID-19 vaccinations are not required at this time. However, I do encourage all eligible students, staff, and family members to consider vaccination to protect your personal health as well as the health of our school community and greater Whatcom County. It is clear that until vaccination rates reach higher levels, we will continue to have to implement strategies to mitigate transmission. This is not a political statement. I simply want to get to the point where masks can be worn at the discretion of individuals rather than as a mandate in our schools. At the end of the day, I always respect the decisions that families make and respect that they are in their best interest.

We may be feeling the heat right now but soon we will be able to detect that hint of fall in the air that signals a new school year. The yellow buses will be rolling and our schools and fields will be bustling with activity and excitement. Thank you in advance for your support in making this year an awesome experience for everyone. All students, parents, staff, and community members are valued and appreciated in Mount Baker!

Go Baker!

Sincerely,

Mary Sewright, Superintendent
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