July 13, 2020

Wildcat Families-

As a result of COVID-19, Governor Inslee mandated all K–12 public and private schools to close on March 13, 2020. Despite pandemic fears and varied levels of access to technology, our staff, students, and families pulled together to do the best to finish the school year. They have used their best creative thinking to try new ways to stay engaged from a distance. However, there is simply no replacement for in-person school, particularly for our most vulnerable students. The longer schools are closed, the more we risk increasing disparate outcomes between those who have access to adequate technology and mental health resources and those who do not. Extended school closure may have a significant long-term effect on these students.

Our school district must now plan for the 2020–21 school year amidst significant uncertainty. Our priority is on safety and health, and we know that reopening will not be easy. We will make every effort to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff. School will look very different from what we are used to, and districts must plan for multiple scenarios, including the possibility of another shutdown.

On June 11, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Olympia released guidance for reopening of schools in the fall. You can find the information at [https://www.k12.wa.us/…/Reopening%20Washington%20Schools%20…](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.k12.wa.us%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublic%2Fworkgroups%2FReopening%2520Washington%2520Schools%25202020%2520Planning%2520Guide.pdf%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR16japYOHrTmmdyVwJVjsDtVUCTgkcz4w3jIYNy0RaoU8biM5Dlke936Wk&h=AT3iiIhObRND9JAurxedV5h-9Hpq-tIVUAM2ooSBKQC2La08r4GTlw2HQFOoGsXLVoMXNxxPFJNMYZ4Qr4cESsgUvmSlOVcjlendMB_6oPX9A1vw5GM3IYF6OjBCiFI-TW7Km-TCw_3mwI7Rqv9Dlxg4W4wVJSLKuGEUI5IXuh9erWhEkdR85f4uArp5NaoDyTMOBeI9YQKvXIUv0KE0SkxAHvlwTnp1BcbCa_16BAITLCRapAbwkDo4ihjF7WzDLhaR32YiN-4hZi8p812zcRWMoDP4_Dp69hcIC0N5izh5ddulDGAEFrMLRmGg4xjh_IQoRiAZD7DxIkd2AuPZZy4RWw6UPyc-6YEavz0iZdQ8M9uPbwYR3PaD48QsvnAHnj4N8lgXFXuhT_LIiBXGSqPSGX_StnPOTtcy3ckGWhV_nOQ8UbBUHcOv_hLcvTahba3kS0Hi66GXCdtgUuMylsaduP5fAp5sl4qr_bKrtNOPbaFNiP9V-3boiy1JtjBJNWOvPCF_bF_kl_Bozww8wIyoxJD4q2Y2k7LKzjNi5TQ0dk6zqZBoAgbi-IMSyObEy--uDqs5kFMsr4s1dND_TKTA5t5xrrIKigp8i5x8DJoCvufPyPEgpRCEwMiNFCq9c-s)

This document provides direction for districts and outlines the planning work that is required by districts in order to reopen in the fall. I do anticipate ongoing changes and updates to this guidance as we progress through the summer.

State Superintendent, Chris Reykdal has made it clear that the goal is for schools to begin providing face-to-face instruction next fall. At the same time, he acknowledges the difficulties schools will face as they work to comply with guidelines issued by the Department of Health. We will also be required to follow guidance from Washington State Labor and Industry

My goal is to get everyone of our students back into our schools, while keeping the health and safety as the highest priority. I will work hard to develop plans with my team so we can get back to doing what we do best—TEACHING and LEARNING!

We are currently coordinating various workgroups to begin developing plans for our reopening.

Our team’s work will focus on:

1. Placing the safety and emotional well-being of both students and staff at the forefront of planning in order to most effectively re-engage our students in learning.

2. Monitoring reopening guidance from the state and develop plans accordingly while being ready to adjust plans as circumstances and guidance changes.

Our current focus is to begin to plan for the following in preparation for fall:

• Purchasing and organizing safety supplies and materials (PPE, masks, gloves, signage, Plexiglas barriers, cleaning supplies, sanitizing supplies)

• Improving our system for remote teaching and learning if this is something that must be implemented in the fall or sometime during the school year

• Mapping out daily routines (physical distancing, transportation, drop-off/pick-up, check-in procedures, school and hallway traffic patterns, classroom logistics and practices, custodial, meals, recess, passing times, special populations, hygiene practices)

• Identifying schedule modifications to allow for physical distancing (split or rotating schedules, phased in schedules)

• Creating systems for attendance, learning standards, assessment, and grading \*if we need to implement some type of hybrid model that would include distance learning

• Developing a COVID-19 exposure and shut down plan with distance learning.

Please click the link to our family survey. I ask that you continue to give us grace and understanding as we work to create the best possible educational scenario for our students and staff. Families, students, and our staff are all anxious to see our schools reopen and begin educating students face to face again, but no one wants to sacrifice the health or safety of students or staff in the process.

We may be faced with requirements that may be frustrating to some, but I want everyone us to remember that our students need to be in school learning, laughing and engaging, and if we have to meet certain requirements to have that happen, then it is worth it. We can do this, TOGETHER!

Thank you for your patience as our team works through these issues carefully and thoughtfully in the weeks ahead. I will continue to communicate with our students, families and the community as we progress through our reopening plan.

Enjoy the summer and stay safe!

Heather Sweet
Ocosta School District Superintendent