



October 14, 2020

Dear students, staff, families and community,

Last Friday Mount Baker School District staff members were all hard at work and engaged in training regarding Culturally Responsive Practices. This was a launch to ongoing learning that will be occurring to ensure we are meeting the needs of all students in an equitable and caring manner. It was empowering learning that challenged all of us to explore our own mental models and how this impacts our practices and interactions with students and families. This initiative aligns with our Strategic Plan Culture of Care Goal: Actively foster a culture of care in which all students are supported, respected, and provided resources necessary for success.

On behalf of myself as well as the School Board, thank you to all community members and staff who gathered at our meeting Thursday night to share comments and learn more about the progress the District is making to implement more in person learning and specifically move to a hybrid model of remote and in person learning. Families that want to stay with remote learning will have that option. It is our intent to move forward with phasing-in the re-entry of students in our schools, and we are committed to communicating our progress in this process. There are many different views regarding moving to in person learning rather than staying with remote learning. As a learning community we all need to come together regardless of our views to be successful with transitioning to a hybrid model in a safe and successful manner. I am calling on everyone to make this a civil and respectful process rather than oppositional. Divisiveness does not serve anyone. We must stay focused on our common interest to promote the academic growth as well as the physical, social, and emotional health of our students while honoring the need to protect the health and welfare of all staff members. Please see our plan for [re-entry phases](#). Currently elementary, junior high, and high school work groups are planning how these phases will look and a tentative time-line for implementation. It is clear that families need a timeframe, and we plan to have that available soon. I will be able to let you know when that information will be released with my communication next Wednesday. It is important to note that any timelines are subject to change depending on circumstances including transmission rates. The Whatcom County Health Department continues to encourage caution with slowly phasing in groups of students returning to school. This is clear in an updated letter from Dr. Stern that is posted on the WCHD website [Revised Letter to Whatcom Superintendents](#).

Many people have asked how they can help Mount Baker School District get back to more in person learning. Since you asked, here are things you all can do including students:

- Protect our County by following the Health and Safety Guidelines for staying home if you have symptoms, wearing a mask, social distancing, washing your hands, and avoiding large gatherings. When people observe this not happening in our community, they get very nervous about safely returning to school
- Honor and respect that people have different views and fears regarding returning to in person learning. Rather than judging or blaming, give people grace, understanding, and validation
- Appreciate each other. Teachers and support staff have worked incredibly hard to connect with students and learn new ways of teaching. Parents have been putting an enormous amount of effort into keeping their students engaged in learning while managing all of their other responsibilities. No-one signed up for this, and we are all doing the best we can including our students.
- Encourage students to keep at it and complete assignments. The more they stay on top of learning now, the better they will do when they re-enter our schools. Reach out to teachers, counselors, and administrators to assist you with this. We are all here to help.
- Take care of your own health. Stay active, take breaks, and do things you enjoy to keep perspective. Our physical health is as important as our mental health. This is beneficial modeling for our students. Stop at a pharmacy and get a flu shot. Better yet, make it a family outing and get everyone a flu shot to avoid that outbreak.
- Stay positive! Stay with us! Keep your Facebook and social media posts productive and inspiring! Keep us Baker Strong!

Connectivity has somewhat improved with hotspots. I just received news that Ziplly has an offer that may help many of our families. As one of the districts that can be served by Ziplly Fiber as part of the K-12 Internet Access program, this “offer code” which is unique to our District can be used as you follow the sign-up instructions:

SIGN UP INSTRUCTIONS AND MESSAGE FROM ZIPLY:

In order for students to apply for this free program, please have a parent or guardian call Ziplly Fiber at 866-916-0139 and provide this promo code: mba2020. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday 8:00am - 10:00pm PST, Saturday and Sunday 8:00am – 6:00pm PST.

To qualify for this program, a student’s household must meet the following criteria:

- **your child must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals through your school, *and***
- **your household had no internet connection in your home prior to August 2020.**

To confirm eligibility, Ziplly Fiber will need a few details from you about your income. This information will be shared with Washington’s K–12 education department through a secure access portal and will never be used for any other purpose. Please note, the State of Washington will audit eligibility throughout the program. Should they determine your eligibility status has changed, service will be discontinued under terms of this program.

Once you are approved for the K–12 Internet Access Program, you will get fast, free Ziplly Fiber internet through June 30, 2021. It's easy to continue with us after that; we have no contracts and offer several affordable plan options.

Ziplly Fiber is committed to helping your student stay connected. We're fast, reliable and friendly. We're Ziplly Fiber.

I truly appreciate all of you and believe we will get through this successfully. There are better times to come if we stick together! This morning I read that the Mount Baker School District area has not had any cases of COVID-19 since September 21st, so we are now at 0 cases per 100,000 for the last two weeks. Go Baker!

I look forward to connecting with all of you. As always, feel free to contact me at 360-617-4600 or msewright@mtbaker.wednet.edu.

Sincerely,

Mary Sewright, Superintendent