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La Center Parents and the Entire La Center Community,

I'd like to update everyone concerning the state's new school metrics that the Governor released. We can now give you some insight into what you can expect from the district in terms of bringing students back for in-person learning.

Here is the condensed version of the new Washington State guidelines (School Metrics) for schools issued by the Governor's office.

- **High, moderate, and low COVID-19 activity thresholds have increased under the revised guidance and local leaders are encouraged to consider test positivity and trends in cases as well as hospitalizations to inform decisions around in-person learning.**
 - **High COVID Activity: Greater than 350 cases per 100,000 people over 14 days and test positivity greater than 10%**
 - High: 350/100,000/14 - At this level, DOH recommends in-person learning for pre-K through grade 5. Schools should prioritize the youngest learners—pre-K, Kindergarten, and grades 1-3—and those with the highest needs (from any grade), such as students with disabilities, students living homeless, or those farthest from educational justice, using small group instruction of 15 or fewer students and strict cohorting due to the level of community transmission. Then phase in grades 4-5, similarly in small groups.
 - Extracurricular activities should be canceled or postponed except for those allowed under the Safe Start protocols.
 - **Moderate COVID-19 Activity: 50-350 cases per 100,000 people over 14 days and test positivity between 5-10%**
 - Moderate: 50-350/100,000/14 - At this activity level, DOH recommends careful phasing in of in-person learning starting with any elementary students not already in-person and middle school students. Then over time, adding high school after middle school and when rates drop below 200 cases per 100,000 over 14 days.
 - Extra-curricular activities are allowed if they follow K-12, applicable Safe Start protocols
 - **Low COVID-19 Activity: Less than 50 cases per 100,000 people over 14 days and test positivity less than 5%**

- Low: <50/100,000/14 - At this activity level, DOH recommends in-person learning for all students, prioritizing full-time in-person learning for elementary students. If space allows, full-time in-person learning can be added for middle and high school students.
- Extra-curricular activities are allowed if they follow K-12, applicable Safe Start protocols

Our county is currently at 386 cases per 100k residences in terms of the restriction guidelines above, also referred to as "high". Based on those restrictions, we are now able to bring back kindergarten through third grade. The county gave us approval in November to bring back our kindergarten students and we have done that in a hybrid model. We have worked with teachers to bring back first and second grade on January 19th. All of the safety protocols previously enacted like physical distancing, masking, sanitizing and cohorting will have to remain in place. Parents of first and second graders will receive letters from their principal via email tomorrow and your student's teacher will also be communicating with you concerning more specifics. All other grades will be receiving letters from their principals with updated information and planning processes via email.

I would like to have our schools back to normal learning as soon as possible. I know this is what the community wants. But we will be returning in a hybrid model due to the state restrictions. We have been in conversations with elementary staff prior to the break and continue to identify all safety concerns while striving toward effective solutions. We are working on a return date for third graders and will communicate that very soon. The phased-in return of fourth and fifth graders will follow third graders.

We are planning for the return of our secondary students in grades 6-12 while we anxiously wait for the county numbers to reach the moderate level. That is the soonest we can bring back those students per the state.

Thank you for your continued patience as we work to bring students back to the in-person classroom. We are well aware of the limitations of the distance learning classroom for most of our students and hope to soon be working directly with our students face to face.

Dave Holmes,

Superintendent,
La Center School District.