

Talking Points:

Fall 2020 Reopening

- Our top priority is to get schools opened back up in the fall in a way that protects student and staff health and safety.
- Learning is a social activity, and it is imperative that students get as much face-to-face time with their educators and peers as possible. However, we know that we will have to make some changes to keep our students and educators safe and healthy, and school will look a little different because of those changes.
- There will not be a one-size-fits-all model for school in Washington state next year. In partnership with their students, staff, families, and local health departments, school districts will create a schedule that works best for their school community.
- As students return to classes in our buildings this fall, there may be some school districts or buildings that cannot meet physical distancing requirements. As districts create a schedule for the fall that works best for their school community, three concepts that they can adapt and build from should they be limited in face-to-face instruction include:
 1. Split or rotating schedules with distance learning,
 2. Phased-in opening with continuous learning, and
 3. “Continuous learning 2.0” – a more effective remote learning system.
- Schools that meet in person will be required to follow the Department of Health’s health and safety guidelines, including requirements around physical distancing, face coverings, and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- School districts are required to adopt a reopening plan through a local school board resolution. They must file those plans with OSPI and the State Board of Education within two weeks of their fall start date.
- School districts who are wholly or partially contained within counties in Phase 1 or Modified Phase 1 of the Governor’s Safe Start Plan must receive approval to reopen from their local health authority.
- The guidance released by OSPI was built in partnership with the state Department of Health and a representative statewide workgroup of experts from the education and health sectors. Their work was informed by their collective expertise as well as research on reopening models in 13 countries and 15 states across the nation.
- This guidance is grounded in the belief that the most equitable opportunity for educational success relies upon the comprehensive supports provided in our buildings,



with our professionals, and the systems of support we have built for decades. We will do this together with student and staff safety as our highest priority in the reopening.

- School districts will be working throughout the summer to prepare for fall. This is likely to include engagement with students, families, and staff, as well as professional learning for educators and staff on remote learning platforms and effective ways of teaching at a distance.
- To ensure equitable access to learning, schools and districts are encouraged to prioritize face-to-face service for students most impacted by the loss of in-person learning services during the school facility closures.
- School districts should build calendars for the 2020–21 school year that include more flexible days than usual in case they are required to close for short or long periods of time.
- Over the summer and throughout the school year, it will be more important than ever for schools and families to work as partners. As parents and families support their child’s learning at home, they will need opportunities and avenues to share what is and isn’t working for their child so adjustments can be made.
- There has never been a bigger moment to examine our education system and transform our practices to further close opportunity gaps. This is a moment to reconsider and shift past practices that have contributed to racial inequality and a lack of equitable opportunities for so many of our students.
- Superintendent Reykdal is urging school and district leaders to use this opportunity to make transformations that they have wanted to make for years, or to make permanent practices they thought were temporary in response to the COVID-19 school closure, but have since learned are better practices. School leaders are encouraged to dive into their grading policies, homework policies, disparate technology access, and learning standards, as well as consider flexible options for students, including mastery or competency-based learning.

